

# AFRICAN GREY PARROTS

ALL ABOUT NUTRITION,  
TRAINING, CARE, DISEASES  
AND TREATMENTS...



ERIKA BUSECAN

# **African Grey Parrots**

## **All About Nutrition, Training, Care, Diseases And Treatments**

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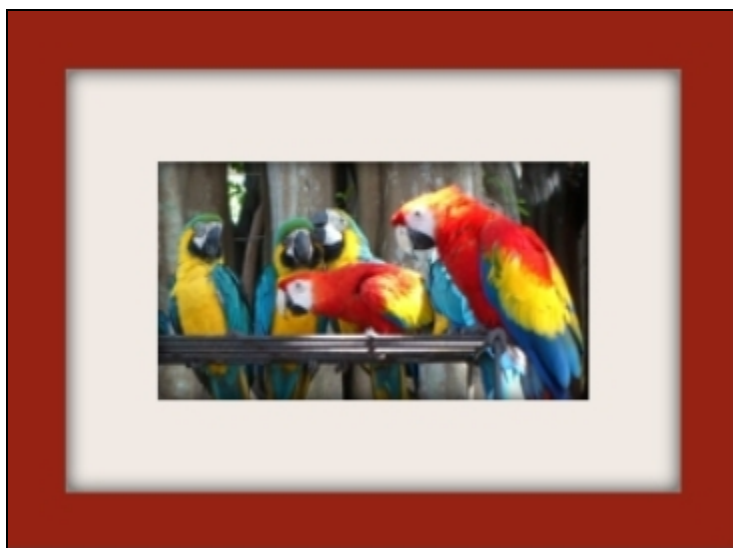
Our love for nature and exotic makes us try to bring close to us in our big or small apartments or houses, these wonderful creatures called, exotic birds.

They are just perfect to fulfill our lives and homes with their interesting singing voices and perfect plumage color.

If you don't own yet a bird and you want to purchase one, or you already have one and want to learn more interesting

things about them like, how to understand your parrot`s behavior to avoid situation of biting, how to understand your parrot`s body language, how to teach them to talk, what steps you must follow if your bird is escaping and you want to bring it back, how to hand feed a baby parrot, how to recognize the abnormal droppings of your bird, how to administer medication to your parrot, how to help your bird when accidents happen, how to help your parrot when it has difficulty in delivering the eggs (the retention of the egg) and much much more, then this book could be interesting for you.

### **Exotic birds - parrots**



Parrots, these extraordinary exotic birds, which are approximately 328 species, have definitely conquered the parrots breeders hearts, for over two hundred years. The amazing intelligence, the beauty of the gorgeous colorful plumage, the ease with which they can be trained and the great ability to imitate human language, made from parrots the most appreciated and most wanted cage birds. Their



appearance on the European continent has its origin since ancient times.

### **Congo African grey parrot**



The Congo African grey parrot ( *Psittacus erithacus*) can be found in West and Central Africa, in tropical forests, from Ivory Coast to West Kenya, Angola and South of Zaire. In the wild they are very noisy birds and they live in flocks from 30 to 10 000 individuals. They are good flyers on short distances.

Grey parrots from some parts of Kenya, Tanzania and Zaire are much bigger and they have more vivid, pale red color on their feathers. The smaller and darker feather coloured exotic birds live in West side of the area, from Ivory Coast to Angola.

### **Description**



The Congo African grey parrots length is between 33-44 cm (12.99 -15.74 inches); an average wingspan of 45 - 50 cm (17.71-19.68 inches) and weight is 450 - 550 grams (0.99 - 1.21 pounds). The female is smaller than the male, with thin and long neck. The feathers coloration is grey, with exception of the tail, which is bright red. The feathers are darker on the head and towards the chest and legs area are light silvery grey color. The wings are darker, the eye area is not covered with feathers and it presents a white patch of skin. The beak has dark grey color and it`s curved shaped, which helps the bird to climb and to crack the nut shells.

## Areas of Congo African grey parrot



- |                       |                       |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 1.Crown               | 13.Toe                |
| 2.Forehead            | 14.Tigh               |
| 3.Eye                 | 15.Vent               |
| 4.Nostril             | 16.Tail               |
| 5.Upper mandible      | 17.Primary feathers   |
| 6.Lower mandible      | 18.Secondary feathers |
| 7.Throat              | 19.Secondary coverts  |
| 8.Lesser wing coverts | 20.Scapulars          |
| 9.Median wing coverts | 21.Mantle             |
| 10.Breast             | 22.Band of wing       |
| 11.Abdomen            | 23.Nape               |
| 12.Foot               | 24.Ear coverts        |

### Character

The Congo African grey parrots are considered the best talking parrots, their only rivals are the amazonian parrots.

They are good imitators, reproducing sounds of phones and other electrical appliances and human voices. Some of these very well trained birds are able to have a verbal communication with you. They will start to speak approximatively after the age of one. First, they will imitate some kind of sounds. Parrots that were previously captured in the wild have an extraordinary repertoire of whistling sounds, clinks and shouts, and they sing and whistle very often during the nights, especially in those with full moon. Although these birds speak all the time, usually they are not considered too noisy birds in comparison with other parrots species.

A Congo African grey parrot can learn about 200 words, the champion of the breed being Prudle, which managed to get into the Guinness Book of records, because of its amazing ability to reproduce more than 1000 words. They will have a happy life living on their own along humans in a quiet environment.



They are extremely intelligent birds, they need a lot of toys and a very strong relationship with humans to prevent behavioral problems. Older birds are less adaptable (on this type of species) to a new owner and they will react by tearing their feathers in response to this kind of changes in their life. Young parrots can adapt very easily to new environments.

Parrots can produce a powder like substance, which helps them to clean and to protect their feathers, but it may cause allergies to humans.

The African grey parrots love to play very often and they are getting bored very easily. All you can do is to make sure that there are toys, pieces of wood (from which they can nibble) and tree branches available for

them. They manifest very often wild behavioral characteristics, which we usually can't see at dogs or cats, that's why they are considered wild animals.

In the wild, if a member of a flock will learn a new skill, then the other members will copy that new skill, because it plays an important role in their survival. Wild parrots have to be always ready to protect their territory, to find food and water, to avoid raptors, to defend their pair and to transmit these qualities to their descendants.

So if you decide to bring a parrot as a pet in your house, you'll have to know that you will need to dedicate time, patience and affection, every single day to your bird.

Your parrot will need to learn to cooperate, to tolerate environmental changes and to accept veterinary care and examinations. S/he has to develop a strong sense of its own personality, otherwise if a bird doesn't learn to clean itself or to play when s/he is alone, after all s/he will decide that the owner can satisfy every kind of their necessity. You'll have to guide your bird towards an acceptable behavior, because it's much easier to prevent bad behaviors, rather than change them.

Because in the wild, parrots used to live in holes of trees, it's very important to offer them wood sticks to chew them. Parrots usually represent a very long term responsibility and they are not the perfect choice for everyone. They have the intelligence of a four years old child, they like to perform, they love drama, they are destructive and noisy and they are behaving naughty because they want attention. If s/he starts screaming for attention and you scream back at the

bird, then what you have done, is that you reinforced the bad behavior to the bird.

Some people think that their bird will bite them. The bird won't bite you as long as you trained and try to manipulate the bird by using your hands and fingers in a friendly and calm way.



People use to react when the bird wants to step up on their finger by grabbing the finger with their beak and people think that the bird its going to bite and they pull their finger away, but all s/he wants is to step up on your finger, because s/he thinks it`s a branch of a tree. If you pull your finger away, it`s going to grab and hold your finger with her/his beak and you will reinforce the bird for another bad habit and s/he will realise, that if s/he grab your finger, it will cause another reaction, another drama. So you have to use positive reinforcement for behavior not resulting in biting. Don't forget, they do have the potential to become very cuddly and devoted birds, and they tend to become attached to their owners.

## **Lifespan**

In captivity birds can live much longer than in the wild, with the condition that they get all the necessary nutrition and care which they need. Even in captivity, the lack of food,

incomplete diet and improper care of parrots could lead to a considerably shorter life span.

The Congo African grey parrot lifespan is approximately between 50-65 years.

## **How to choose the right bird**

### **General criteria**

Parrots are very lovely exotic birds, so if you want to be happy with your bird, you have to study your parrot's species personality and abilities, which will help to create a perfect pet-owner relationship, leading to a happy life together.

If you ask a few people who wish to have an exotic bird about what they are expecting from the bird, the answer will be: to be smart, to be beautiful, to be able to learn to speak as fast as possible, to have a perfect singing voice, to be a clean bird, without damaging things in the house and the cost for everyday needs of the bird to be as cheap as possible. Before you make a decision to purchase a bird, you have to be aware of the fact that very few birds could match your expectations and you have to realise that these birds will be your companions for many years.

A parrot requires less time than a dog and it's easy to maintain, but don't forget that it will need food, cage cleaning and at least once a day fresh water.

Your birds need your companionship and affection and it's very important to spend few moments daily with them.

If you are uncertain about keeping a pair or just a single parrot, then you have to take into consideration that a single bird is much easier to maintain and to train. But if you don't have enough time to spend with him/her every single day, then I would strongly recommend to buy a pair instead of a single bird.



If you decide to purchase a single bird, but you are uncertain about the bird`s gender, then you have to take into consideration that the males are ideal pet birds and can be easily domesticated than females. Males are not as noisy and destructive as females during breeding period and they can learn much easier to speak, because of their capacity for imitation. Another personal advice: take the bird with you if you are going in holiday, because they just love going in holiday and love spend all their time with you and your family.

### **How to purchase a healthy bird**

Purchasing a bird directly from the breeder or from the pet store has multiple advantages. You can get information about their health condition, their provenience and also you can check the quality of the environment where they've been kept. You have to know a few aspects which could indicate hidden diseases: the bird has to be active with a good stability on its feet; the nostrils must be clean without secretion; the feathers around the beak must be clean; the bird`s breathing has to be clear without whistling sounds; the eyes have to be clear; the missing feathers from the wings or tail could indicate “french moulting”- viral disease which leads to feathers loss; dirty feathers (with feces) at the tail area could indicate digestive system problems.

### **How to determine the parrot`s gender**



With some exceptions, parrots are sexually monomorphic, which means that their gender can't be determined by their markings or the color of their feathers. Differences of the appearance between the two genders are very small and you can't recognize the gender of the bird by looking at it. The easiest and less expensive method for determining a parrot's gender is through quick DNA testing. There are lots of companies offering DNA testing as a mail-order service. You can also determine your parrot's gender after they've molted once. Males have a firm red tail on the underside or the secondary retrices, and those of the hen are tipped in grey color. Hens usually have a gradual dark to light grey color, from neck to belly, while males have a more uniform grey color in this area. The under tail coverts, which are located under the tail feathers will be edged in grey, while males will have solid red feathers and the males also have a very thin white stripe on the edge.

## **Life with cage birds**

### **Preparing your house for the new arrived parrot**

Before you bring your beloved bird in your house, first you have to find a proper place for it. It means that this place has to be quiet and without any air currents. The cage has to be equipped with all the necessary things: food, water and toys.



First day it`s better to offer a little bit of privacy to the bird, even if we like to watch it, and it is recommended to cover the cage, especially during the day.

If you already own birds, the new arrived bird has to be isolated in a separate cage (cages which are usually used for the transportation of the bird). You have to leave the bird to get used with the new conditions and with the new owner. Your parrot is considered accommodate when it`s not used to get scared at the appearance of the owner, when s/he feeding properly and when its feathers look normal.

After the accommodation process, when you want to move your bird in another cage with the other birds, instead of stressing the bird by catching it with your hands, you better bring closer the entrances of the two cages and leave them in this position a for while, to give the chance to your bird to get into the other cage whenever s/he wants and when it is totally relaxed.

## **The transportation of the parrots**



Transportation of the birds can be dangerous when it's done improperly and can cause serious problems to your bird. When you transport your bird from your vet or from pet shop to your home it is recommended to keep it in a special cage without water and food bowls, and toys in it, or in special cartoon boxes with tiny holes in them for the bird to be able to breath and to avoid accidents. If you choose the cage, you better cover it with a piece of thin, dark colored material and make sure that it has a hole on the top for the holder of the cage. You can also transport your bird in a bigger shoe box with lid. The box must present on the sides little holes that you can hand made them which are necessary for the air circulation inside the box.

### **The new arrived parrot`s diet**

When you purchase your bird, you have to know all about your bird's diet: what kind of food s/he was previously consumed. If the bird has not received the proper diet, then you have to replace it gradually. You'll need to offer your new arrived bird, freshwater and pieces of apples. If your bird presents signs of weakness, you'll have to offer some moist biscuits and egg paste; if s/he looks healthy, you can give your bird the usual food, but also you can add in his/her food some poppy seeds (it will have a calming effect on

your bird). The chamomile tea (instead of water) has also a good calming effect and makes your bird to feel more relaxed.

## **How to train your parrot**

### **Talking and training**

The right owner for a grey parrot has to be somebody who want to invest time in it, and for this reason, before you get a parrot, you have to study these birds behavior and learn about what are the requirements to look after them. The most important thing that you have to do is to getting your bird used with other people. You have to make sure that almost every day your parrot will have the chance to get in contact with new people, to experience new surroundings. All those experiences and interactions with other people must be a positive experience for them.

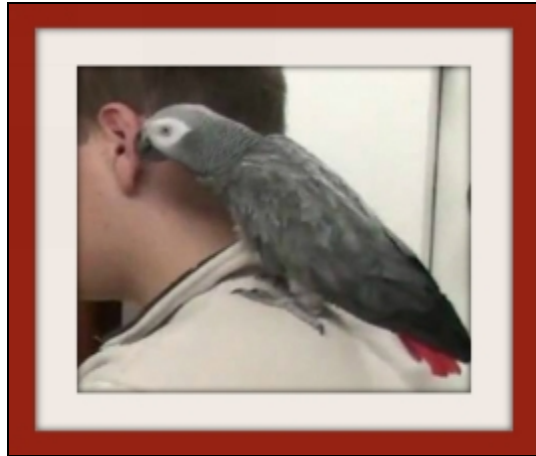
If you really want to teach your parrot to talk, then you'll have to be more patient, you'll have to speak very often with him/her, and your voice has to be very calm. The training lessons have to represent positive experiences for your parrot and they have to last for about 5-10 minutes, once or twice a day. It could be one hour after the bird`s wakes up and about one hour before the bird goes to sleep, that`s because during day the bird is most active and when they are active they`are less inclined to be open to training.



You have to combine training time with play time, because you actually want to make the bird to enjoy the training because they deal with a positive experience. You'll have to encourage your parrot with the right words like “well done” and you'll have to offer rewards every time s/he will said the words right.

Be aware, never yell or hurt your parrot when s/he doing something wrong or you feel that s/he is stressing you. The bird will lose its confidence in you and will be very hard for you to regain it again. For the first days, don't try to handle the bird, because the most important thing is to get used with each other.

Place the cage in the same room where you use to spend most time. Talk to your bird as much as possible and when you change the water and food, try to do it by not stressing the bird too much. After a few days you can leave the cage door open and s/he will realise that you are the best friend for him/her. S/he will come out of the cage and will learn to step up on your finger. Soon you will observe that your parrot will sit very comfortable on your shoulder, which means that s/he accepted you.



Parrots, in general, love sitting on people's shoulders and love to chew things which decreases their aggression and actual depression problems. They like to chew on your hair, you don't have to worry about it (they don't bite it off), they're just chewing on it because they`re enjoying that. One of the most important word for your parrot to learn is “step up”. Even if s/he steps up on your finger without any previous command, it is recommended to say the words “step up” every time the bird is performing your command and you'll have to say: “well done”, “good girl” or “good boy” after that.



Some parrots do learn to talk very well, but first they learn to talk on their own, by listening human conversations and imitating sounds. So, the first thing you can do to encourage

your parrot to talk, is to repeat the words all the time. To encourage your parrot to say specific phrases that you really want your parrot to repeat, try to say them in a regular basis. Talk to your parrot when s/he is concentrated at you, that is usually when his/her eyes are attentive. The first word that most parrot will learn is "Hello", because that is the first thing they hear whenever someone walks into a room.



It's very important to reward and to answer to your parrot every time it's saying words or making sounds, even if they are correct or not. Don't scream at your bird when s/he is very loud, you better try to maintain a calm conversation. Watch out what you say in front of your bird, parrots used to learn much quicker the words that you don't really want to learn.

African greys are more shy and they tend to talk in their cages, meanwhile other species of parrots like cockatoos and amazons loves attention.

You can use clickers with success to achieve the best training results, parrots usually learn quicker when you're using a clicker. When you start training your bird, first give it a treat and in the same time say "well done" or click the clicker. Your parrot will associate these sounds with the treat. Once the bird makes the association between praise

(click) and treat, you can delay the reward. If your parrot already knows the “step up” command, then it`s easy to teach him/her to say “hello”. You'll have to raise your hand in front of the bird, just like you want the bird to step up on it. When s/he step up say “well done” and give to your bird the treat. Repeat this command for a few times, until the bird will understand it. Once the bird has raised his/her leg on its own to get the treat, wait and give the treat only when the bird is raising its leg a little bit higher. You can also use very subtle signs with your hands if you want your parrot to answer back to you. You have to choose a sign and use it in the same way you use a command, followed by a treat or a praise. Your bird will learn very fast every little movements of your fingers.

### **How to teach your parrot not to bite**

It`s our natural behavior when a bird bites, to put the bird down and then we start to yell at that bird. In this situation we reinforce the bird to bite us, because that brings the bird more and more attention. All we want to do is to reinforce and reward good behaviors like doing interactive things, standing on your hand, playing quietly, that are positive and socially acceptable.





For example, choose a toy, a key or an object which could interest your parrot, when s/he is touching that object reward or praise your bird. After s/he seems to look that s/he understand that command, make it to pick up that object. You have to repeat this game until your parrot will pick it up and will bring you that object. Another trick is to learn your bird to play basketball by picking up an object and introducing it through a tiny basket ring. Training lessons have to be short about 5-10 minutes and to represent a positive experience for you and for your bird.



The rewards (treats) have to be small quantities, but also something that your bird will enjoy to eat, like sunflower seeds, for example. If you offer big rewards to your bird, then s/he will spend too much time to eat them and your training lesson will be interrupted for too long.

If your bird bites you, try hard not to even yell out in pain, just take the bird and put it down and walk away. Your parrot will learn, that when s/he bites you, then s/he will lose your attention. Make your bird have things available, that s/he can do with his/her mouth, so that s/he don't bite you. Your parrot can't eat and bite, can't shred toys and bite at the same time, so if you can anticipate the behavior from

happening, regardless of what the behavior is (biting, screaming) for example, and you can provide some sort of distraction for your bird, they will not bite.

### **Learn to observe your parrot`s body language**

Parrots usually show us how they're feeling and what they're going to do, by using their bodies in different ways, because they tend to

communicate with us by this way.

When they have their tail flared it means that they are excited or they will bite you. If your parrot has all its feathers sticking out, with it`s wings held out from the body, then s/he could be ready to fight.



You can also observe a few clues at your parrot, when s/he intend to bite. It will open its beak and will spread it`s legs apart for a

firmer grip on the perch. You can interact with your parrot to prevent the bite, when you observe these kind of signs.

When your parrot is happy to see a friend of yours or another bird, then s/he might puff out all its feathers or wag its tail or moves it`s beak up and down.

Congo African grey parrots learn to amuse themselves, by playing tricks on some people with their body language, by giving outward signs of friendliness, and then they will bite when they're approached with fingers.

They do such things because they like to test people and see if they will jump away.

## **Cold season, hot season**

### **How to care of your bird in cold season**

Exotic birds can`t resist at sudden weather changes (from sudden cold to sudden hot weather), you'll have to maintain a constant temperature for them during winter. Parrots like humidity, so if the air condition of your house is very dry, because of the heating system, it is recommended to spray your bird daily with a handheld spray bottle.

### **How to care of your bird in hot season**

Many people think that parrots feel at “home” in high temperatures, but bird owners have to be prepared for hot weather. Bird`s body temperature is between 104 -105.8 degrees Fahrenheit ( 40-41 degrees Celsius), therefore your bird will withstand temperatures that goes up until this level. Birds don't have sweat glands like we do, so they

can't adjust their body temperature. When we perspire, the evaporation of the moisture on our skin cools us. There are several ways in which your bird can drop his own body temperature:

- through panting: birds increase their breathing rate, by faster breathing with the beak open. They have dry mouths and while we see them panting, when they're overheated, they're reacting to the heat and this does not mean that they can combat it without our help. Their life could be in danger, because they can become dehydrated by evaporation of the water through respiratory system (mouth, nostrils and lungs).

- evaporation of water through skin and feet

- through vibration of the neck's structures.

Birds that are brought outside should be watched closely. If you observe that your parrot is holding its wings away from its body and is panting, then you have to bring it to cooler temperatures and give it a shower with water at room temperature. Using cold water on overheated bird can cause organ damage, shock and even death.



Don't place the cage in direct sunlight, because your bird will need a shady place and humidity. You can attach a spray

or sprinkler system to the top of the cage or of your aviary and you can also set a timer on, and cool down the cages to offer your bird a refreshing shower.

## **Cages and accessories**

When you choose a cage for your bird you have to take into consideration the size and the temperament of your bird, because s/he will spend almost all it`s time in that cage. You have to assure your bird with the ability to fly without any problem between the climbing perches or to flap its wings.

## **Cage location**

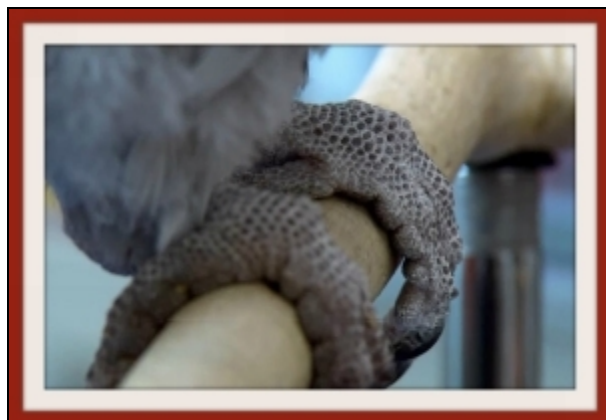
Your parrot just adore you to be around him/her, so you'll have to place the cage in the same room where you spend most of your time. To avoid any possible danger, you'll have to take into consideration a few aspects:

- place the cage near the window, so your parrot can enjoy the natural light;
- avoid placing the cage in air currents;
- avoid placing the cage in the kitchen, especially when you cook, because the steam could contain toxic substances for your parrot;
- don't place the cage near television or near any home audio system;

## **Cages**



The cage has to be two or three times bigger than the bird's wingspan and three times bigger than the bird's length from head to tail. It has to be big enough for the bird, so it will be able to open its wings and flaps them. Especially for single birds you'll have to equip the cage with lots of toys, mirrors and swings. You'll have to change the toys very often, to keep your bird from becoming bored. To maintain your parrot's foot health, you must provide proper perches for the bird's feet, otherwise it will be difficult for your parrot to properly hold on to a perch.



Your parrot should be able to stand on the perch, without the toes completely touching each other in a circle. If you choose to offer your parrot natural branch perches, make sure that they are without any wild bird droppings and free of insects. You'll have to disinfect it with hot boiled water, before using it. There are also comfortable braided rope perches, which are good choice for your bird to rest on.



The resistance of the cage is very important, one made of metal is much resistant than one made of plastic. The space between the bars it's very important, because the bird could get it's head, legs or even its beak stuck. When you buy a cage make sure that it's not painted, because parrot's will eat the paint, and if the paint is toxic, s/he can get sick and even die.

## **Aviaries**

Outdoor aviaries are more spacious than traditional cages and what's more important is that they allow parrots more space and offer a natural environment and fresh air.



An outdoor housing place is made up of two compartments: a net aviary (flight unit) and a shelter place. The net aviary has to be made of galvanized steel mesh and it should be 19 gauge (19G) and maximum dimension of 2.5 cm x 1.25 cm (1 x ½ in). Netting of this size should also help to keep rodents, and snakes out of the aviary, these creatures may well eat the eggs and the birds as well.

To protect the aviary from predators as rats, weasels, and cats you need to bury the galvanized wire mesh deeply (at least a foot ) in the ground or you will need to lay down a solid base, constructed using blocks or bricks sunk into the ground.

Ideally, the floor of the flight should be of concrete, which is much easier to clean than is grass. The aviary should have provisions for food, drinking water, bathing water, grit, perching, nesting and a place to hang a Cuttlefish bone. During the day they will perch on twigs or wooden dowels and you can offer your bird pine cones, balls, chains to play. If you place potted plants in your aviary, the birds will spend a lot of time perching, picking and climbing, so you should provide non poisonous plants like a fruit tree, a honeysuckle bush, a privet or a forsythia.





The dimensions of the flight have 4-5 metres in length (157,4 - 196,8 inches); up to 2 metres in height (78,74 inches); and between 1.2 and 1.8 metres wide (70,86 inches) width.

The perches should never be so thick that your birds cannot grip them adequately, nor so thin that the birds front toes curl right round to the back. Perches can be constructed in the shape of a `T`, and fixed in the floor, or suspended by means of wire loops attached firmly to the aviary framework. Perches should not overhang feeding utensils, because these are likely to be soiled by droppings from above. None of the wood used for perches should have been recently sprayed with chemicals. Branches are sometimes soiled by other wild birds, so it`s very important to wash them before use.

## **Roofing**

The roof of the flight nearest to the shelter should be covered with translucent plastic sheeting. This will help the birds to sit outside when the weather is bad or it`s very hot. The shelter can be roofed with marine plywood, with all the cracks being filled with a waterproofing material and tarred over, before heavy-duty roofing felt is applied. This should overlap for several inches

down the sides of the shelter. To ensure that the interior remains dry, guttering should be attached along the back of the sloping roof, to carry the rainwater away from the aviary.

## **Toys and accessories**



Very inventive and always searching for something new, parrots will be happy to find in their cages all kind of toys. You have to be careful when you choose the toys, because parrots have tendency to take apart things, because every new toy is a challenge for them. When you choose toys for your parrot it's like choosing toys for a child: they have to be safe and the bird has to be happy to play with them without stressing itself. The best toys for them are pieces of soft wood or perches, ping-pong balls, all kind of unpainted paper-made items, etc... You'll have to provide some items which helps to maintain the physical health condition of your bird:

- swings and chains which increases the capacity of movement;
- therapeutical perches which helps to maintain the bird's feet healthy;

- perches or any wood made objects which are good for chewing ( if you neglect your bird by not offering him/her different objects to chew, could lead to beak deformation )
- a bowl with fresh water for bathe
- various nutritional supplements like Cuttlefish bone, seashells, etc...

One of the best game that your parrot could play is when s/he has to get out a peanut which is hide inside of a tiny hole of a log. Your parrot has to chew the log to get inside and to get the peanut. This game makes your bird to concentrate and to work hard to eat.



You can also make your parrot happy by replacing the old toys and perches with new ones. In fact, toys and interactive games which makes your bird to work hard mentally and physically, will keep your bird healthy and svelte.

**The main diet of Congo African grey parrots**



A balanced and rational diet has to offer the body a permanent healthy state. The main diet of grey parrots is pellets, supplemented with high quality mixture of seeds, cereals, vegetables, nuts and proteins. Cereals like wheat contain high level of sulphur, which can be administered to your parrot as a food supplement in molting period. The sulphur helps to regenerate the plumage of the bird, that's why you need to increase the quantity of wheat in your parrot's diet during molting period. Oat seeds contain carbohydrates and a high level of albumins, which have an important role in development of young birds. It's a good choice for young parrots, adult parrots should have only 10% of supplementation in their diet from this cereal. Too much oat can lead to obesity. Corn seeds contain low level of vitamins and albumins, but is very rich in carbohydrates. Parrots love to eat boiled corn, you can offer them as treats. Small seeds like millet and canary seeds should be mixed with the grey's regular seed mix, but be careful too much millet seeds offered as treat could lead to obesity. Canary seeds contain carbohydrates. Fruits contain most of all sugar and it has very low quantities of nutrients. Pellets represent between 60-80 % of a parrot's diet, it's better to give your bird more pellets than seeds, because pellets offer a complete nutrition. Parrots which were fed only seeds

use to have a shorter life span, because seeds contain a high level of fat and insufficient vitamins, proteins and minerals.



Seeds have to represent no more than 12 % of your parrot's diet and they must not be dusty, or mould infested. Nuts and hazelnuts should be given in the same quantity as the seeds, and have to be offered in their own shell because it can be a good brain exercise for your bird. If you have a young bird, it could be possible to teach him/her how to do it , by cracking the hazelnut shell. You can offer your bird rice bread and rye bread; cereals like oats flakes or corn flakes but without sugar.



Vegetables are very good nutrients for your bird and you can also give them frozen because they're just as nutritious as fresh veggies (during summer you can offer them fresh veggies): cucumbers, tomatoes, broccoli, carrots, green beans, pod peas, lettuce, peppers, celery, etc... Vegetables should be given in higher quantities than fruits: grapes, melon, bananas, pears, nectarines, papayas, mangos, strawberries, blueberries, grapefruit, oranges. You can also offer fresh herbs like: yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*), plantain (*Plantago lanceolata*), coltsfoot (*Tussilago farfara*), shepherd`s purse ( *Capsella bursa pastoris*). Leaves and branches of fruit trees, oak trees, beech trees (*Fagus sylvatica*), willow trees (*Salix alba*) are the best source of vitamins, you can provide them directly from forests. You also have to offer the opportunity to your parrot to chew these kind of branches.

Offer your bird once or twice per week boiled eggs. Boiled egg shells are the best source of calcium, so you can offer them to your bird in crushed form. Your parrot will love to serve

some boiled chicken meat once or twice per week.

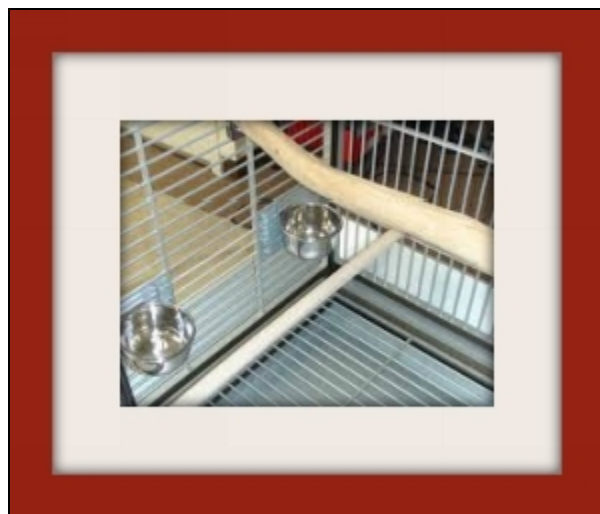
When your bird is eating fruits, its droppings become more watery, but this should not cause alarm. African grey parrots usually suffer from calcium deficiency more often than any other species, so you have to offer them calcium - rich vegetables and fruits like broccoli, carrots, spinach, dandelion greens, mustard greens, figs, kale, endive, apricots.



Parrots which are fed on high quality pellets usually don't need vitamin and mineral supplementation. Over supplementation with vitamins could lead to intoxication of your bird. Supplementation with vitamins are recommended just in case when your bird's main diet is based on seeds. Another important thing is, never give up when you try to offer your bird new foods and it refuses them. You'll have to try more than once, by mixing the new food into other foods. Birds learn by observation and they use to watch what we eat, so they will try the new food. Avoid giving your bird avocado, chocolate, caffeine, sugary or salty snacks, milk products and alcohol! Uneaten food should be removed from the cages after two hours. It's very important to have all the time in the cage some grit, because it helps with digestion.

### **Cleaning your parrot's house**

Your beloved parrot could be easily affected by the bacterias which can live in the cage during the day, that`s why you need to clean it every day and a more complex clean every week. The floor of the cage, the food and water recipients should be clean daily.



I recommend that the floor of the cage should be covered with kitchen paper towel, or paper sheets which can be changed daily. The disinfection of the cage, and food and water recipients must be made with hot water weekly. Don't use disinfection products very often because they are toxic for your parrot! When you do so, be careful and move the bird in a different room. It`s very important to use eye protection glasses and gloves when the disinfection operation is taking place, because it can cause serious injuries.

You can use bleach for disinfection, but be aware to not mix it with other chemical products, because it`s very dangerous. You can use the bleach in diluted form : 30 ml of bleach mixed with 250ml of water. This mixture will be very efficient to combat bacterias and viruses. After you finish with the disinfection process, it`s very important to rinse well with cold water the recipients and the cage.



## Breeding



Grey parrots reach sexual maturity at 3-5 years old. They are usually reproducing all year long, but most of them are likely to do so in winter time or the beginning of spring. Hens usually lay between 2-4 eggs, the egg sitting period last for 21 days. The weaning period of the youngsters takes place between 6-8 weeks old. Breeding season takes place in the months of March - April. Some grey parrots are very shy and they need some intimacy during breeding season. They will breed in shadowy places or in nesting boxes. The African greys require deep vertical, horizontal nesting boxes, with dimensions of 17.23 x 17.23 x 23.5 inches (45 x 45 x 60 cm) or you can choose an L - shaped nesting box with the same dimensions.



The size of the cage has to be at least 47.1 x 47.1 x 47.1 inches ( 120 x 120 x 120 cm ) or 35.7 x 35.7 x 70.55 inches (90 x 90 x 180 cm)

### **The anatomy of Congo African grey parrots**

The bird's body is covered with feathers, which helps maintain body temperature during the flight. The feathers are made out from keratin, the same protein found in our hair and nails. The feathers are covered with a thin layer of grease and feather powder. The grease is extracted with the help of the beak from the uropygial gland and distributed on the feathers. At some birds like pigeons and some species of parrots the uropygial gland is missing or is not properly developed and they have feather powder. A plumage which is permanently protected with grease or feather powder can't become wet, because the rain will just simply flow down from it.

There are several types of feathers:



**Contour feathers** cover most of the surface of the bird and they protect the bird from sun, rain, wind and injury.

**Flight feathers** are the large feathers of the wing and tail. The tail feathers act as brakes, controlling the orientation of the flight. The flight feathers basis are covered with smaller contour feathers called coverts. There are several layers of coverts on the wings.



**Down feathers** are soft, fluffy and small feathers and can be found under the contour feathers.

**Filoplumes** are very fine, hair - like feathers.

**Semiplumes** provide aerodynamics, form and insulation.

**Bristle feathers** are usually found on the head.

**The skeleton of the bird** is adapted to flight function, so the bones are hollow and lightweight, without marrow inside. In some bones, the hollow cavities contain extension of the air sacs from the lungs, which helps the bird to get the oxygen it needs to fly easily and quickly.

**The beak** has no teeth, it's also known as bill and it has two parts: the upper mandible and the lower mandible.

The upper mandible doesn't move independently from the skull and the lower mandible can move independently.

**The wings** of the bird are much like the arm and hand of the human.

The more important muscles are the breast muscles and those of the wings.

The breast muscles are one third the total body weight of the bird and they are attached to a large bone, called the keel. The keel

extends from the breastbone ( sternum ) down along the chest and stomach.

## **Respiratory organs**

Birds have a single nasal cavity and the larynx does not have voice cords, it helps only to lock trachea during swallowing.

They have lungs and they have also nine air sacs through which air circulates. These air sacs allow a continuous flow of air through the respiratory system.

## **Digestive components**

The beak serves to pick up food and for seed peeling.

The crop is the muscular pouch and it can be found at the end of the esophagus and serves as a chamber for storing and softening food, until the food already in the stomach moves on through the rest of the digestive system.

The crop leads to a two - chambered stomach: one called **proventriculus**, which has the role to produce stomach enzymes for breaking food down, and the other chamber called **ventriculus** or **gizzard**, a powerful muscular organ, which takes the place of teeth and here the seeds and an assortment of grains of sand are squeezed until the seeds break up into a digestible form.



From here, the food goes through thin then thick intestine and the digested food arrives in cloaca. The cloaca is the final part of a digestive tract and it is a small chamber with a mucous membrane. Parrots excrete their feces and their urine from the cloaca and it also plays an important role in reproduction.

## **Urinary tract organs**

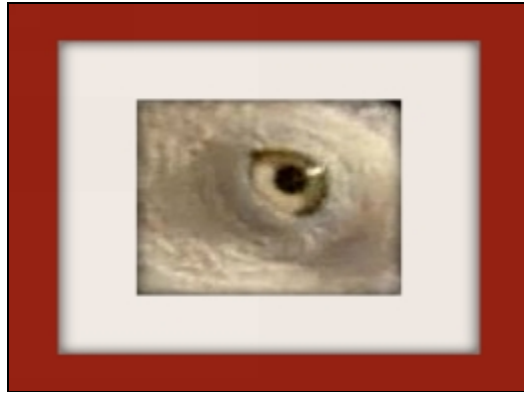
The kidneys of the birds are located on both sides of the backbone and they are protected by the air sacs. The urine

will be eliminated through the cloaca and it can be a soft or solid substance and it contains uric acid which makes it very corrosive.

## **Genital organs**

Cocks have testicles and females have ovaries inside the body and when the birds are ready to breed, their reproductive organs (testes and ova) swell and produce the sperm and ova. At cocks the sperm is stored in the cloaca, until an opportunity to mate arises, and hens will receive the sperm into their cloaca before it will fertilized their ova. Females have only one ovary and one oviduct, but in early stages of embryonic development each female bird has two ovaries and only the left ovary develops into a functional organ. During the breeding season the size of the ovary is changing, becoming larger. Males have paired abdominal testes which can be found inside of the cavity of the body. During breeding season the testes increase in size, becoming almost five times bigger than the initial size. Body temperature is between 104 - 105.8 degrees Fahrenheit ( 40-41 degrees Celsius), which increase with 32.9 degrees Fahrenheit ( 0.5 degrees Celsius ) during sexual maturity, during egg laying process and in molting period.

## **The eyes**



Most of the birds have their eyes placed on the side. With the help of their mobile neck birds can see the surroundings in a radius of 360 degrees and can fly away rapidly if there is any danger nearby. The lower eyelid of the bird is mobile and the upper one is almost fixed. The third eyelid which is called nictitating membrane is hinged at the inner side of the eye and it serves to protect the eyes from bright light, wind, etc...

### **The ears**

The ears are tiny, round holes situated in the right and left side of the head, behind the eyes and they are covered with feathers. There are no cartilaginous pavilions, but inside the ear there is the organ of balance. When the bird suffers from ear diseases, the organ of balance is also affected. The sick bird can't hold itself properly on the perches and its head is twisting to the affected ear.

### **MOLTING**

The molting process can take place once or twice per year, which usually doesn't have any effect on the bird's flying capacity.

Natural molting happens when the warm season ends and the colder season starts to appear and the birds will change

all their feathers. The molting will take place gradually, at some birds it will take from 2 to 3 months (March - June) and it could happen after the birds have hatched their eggs and after rearing their youngsters. This process is influenced by the hormones of thyroid gland and the genital organs. In this period they`ll need proper diet like camomile tea (*Matricaria Chamomilla*), St John's wort tea (*Hypericum Perforatum*), amino acid like methionine, hemp seeds and vitamins like A, D, E.



They also become very stressed when molting takes place, and makes them vulnerable to new diseases. In this period they`re cleaning themselves persistently and have a more quiet behavior. When normal molting taking place, there should never be bald patches present on the bird's body. The new feathers that are replacing the old feathers, are called blood feathers. If the blood feather is cut or injured it can bleed in excess. If your bird has broken blood feathers, you'll have to ask your avian vet help.





All he has to do is to pull the broken feather out and apply some pressure with a gauze square to stop the bleeding. When your parrot is molting it could have many pinfeathers present especially on the back of its head because a single parrot can't preen the normally present feather sheaths from the back of the head. You can help your parrot by removing gently the feather sheaths with your index finger and thumb. You have to be very careful when you are doing this operation, because it could be very painful for your bird.

### **Stress bars**

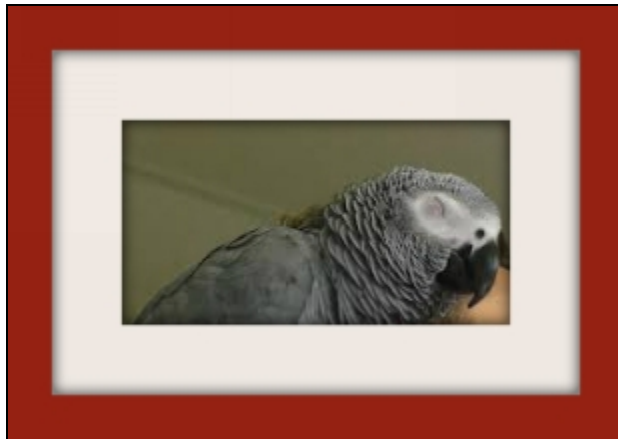


Stress bars usually are dark or discolored lines which appears in new feathers and represents the first sign of a disease. You'll have to regularly check your bird's feathers

to see if there are any stress bars on them, if yes, then you'll have to inform your avian vet.

## **How to maintain your parrot`s health**

### **The first sign of disease**



There are several physical and behavioral signs about the bird`s illness:

- depressed attitude and unusual irritability;
- they sleep more than 10-12 hours per day, with their head hidden under the wing
  - they keep their eyes almost shut all the time and the wings hang from the body
  - don`t have the same stability on their legs and they spend more time as usual on the bottom of the cage
  - their appetite is reduced and they are losing weight
  - don't clean their plumage and their feet
  - excessive cough and sneeze and nose secretion dripping
  - the feathers around the beak are dirty
  - their feces colour differs from normal and they present diarrhoea
  - excessive moulting

- discoloration of the feathers
- breathing difficulties

When you recognize these signs, you should contact your vet doctor for a precise diagnosis.

### **Few advices about how to keep your parrots healthy**

The most important condition to keep your birds healthy is a proper diet. Choosing the appropriate cage and the right environment are very important factors. A smaller cage than usual can cause agitation and the bird will try to escape. The cage must kept clean, to avoid bacterial infestation. Daily flying exercises is needed.



Watch out, your ornamental plants: philodendron, iris and yellow daffodil could be poisonous for your birds. Cigarette smoke, hair spray (hair lacquer), body spray, furniture spray, vapors of household cleaners like bleach, should be avoided, when the birds are around. Avoid exposing your cage with your parrot outside when there are dangerous cats around because they can easily knock down the cage.



Learn about the natural habits of your bird, for example you can find out if your bird love to have baths most often than showers, then you have to place a bowl filled with water in the cage, or for the other option you'll have to spray him/her with water very often. Try to discover and offer your bird the most favorite and natural foods as possible and make available natural environments for it.

Make regular veterinary examinations for your bird`s safe, because they can hide the signs of diseases. In the wild sick birds used to hide any sign of their disease, they even try to eat with the rest of the flocks, because there is a risk to lose their life ( the others will steal his food and bit him because they feel his weakness). The cage birds can act the same way, they look like they are healthy, they eat very well, until one day they could fall off from the perches. Even when they have sharp pains, they don't tend to exteriorize their feelings. The bird plumage can hide the eventually weight losses caused by diseases.

If you recognize the signs represented above, you better visit your avian vet as soon as possible. Sometimes a routine examination can help to discover any latent infection of the bird.

## How to recognize the abnormal droppings



Feces and urine are eliminated by your bird at the same time. The color of feces depend of the assimilation of the food and it can vary from dark green and brown, to black. On the feces usually there is a white urine patch. If the darker part of the feces is more liquid, then the bird has diarrhoea. When the urine appears like a lake around the fecal material, there could be kidney problems. There could be situations when you have to visit your avian vet for routine examinations (check-ups) and because of the stress, the droppings of your bird could have a very liquid form, but just for a short period of time and it will normally pass away. In this case we don't talk about diseases. For a precise examination you better visit your avian vet.

## **Feather picking and self -mutilation**



When a bird moves its beak through the feathers making them clean, then we talk about preening. But when the bird starts to pay too much attention to its feathers by pulling them out obsessively, then we talk about self-mutilation.



There could be several causes to this problems like: skin diseases, stress or internal diseases. When the main cause is the skin itchiness, among the special treatments prescribed by your avian vet, you can also apply directly on the bird's skin some anesthetic powder. In this period you'll have to avoid placing the cage near radiators or in direct sunlight, because the bird`s skin will become excessively dry.

### **How to catch and manipulate your parrot without hurting it**

There are many situations when you'll have to catch and hold the bird in your hands.

First of all, you have to remove all the accessories from the cage, including: the water and feeding bowls, the mirror and other things. The most easiest method to catch the bird without stressing it is to turn the power off in the room where the bird is located. Before you turn the power off, you'll have to know exactly where is located the bird. You

can catch him/her very easily because s/he can't see very well in the dark. You can also use a scarf by placing it on the head of your parrot to be able to grab carefully the neck then to fix the head. With the other hand you'll have to hold the legs with which s/he can cause serious injuries. For this procedure you'll have to use some leather made gloves. It is generally better to grab them by the neck than by the belly because parrot's neck is extremely strong, flexible and mobile, and it has more vertebrae, than human's or mammal's. The neck is considered to be the strongest part of a parrot's body. Birds breathe by expanding the rib cage outward, which draws air in. That's why is so important when you examine or try to clip your bird's wings to avoid pressing the chest area, because it will not be able to breathe. They have a very strong beak and neck so they can hang of your fingers with no problem . When you are carrying them around restrained you can hold them on their back , this is also

useful for when you need to groom your parrot, or check its wings. For the examination of the bird there's need for two persons: one to hold the bird and one for the examination: Check both wings of the bird, first by open the left and then the right wing like a fan and check the feathers. With a magnifying glass you can check for ticks. You can also check the breast muscle by touching it very gently. In the middle part of the chest there is the sternum. If you feel that the stern is very sharp, then we can talk about malnutrition (the bird is sick from a longer period of time or doesn't receive enough food).You can also check for the cloacal opening the common orifice through which is eliminate the feces and urine, and at females the eggs passes just through the same opening. The feathers from this area must be clean, if they are not, it means that the bird suffer from diarrhea. You'll have to check the belly, which is under the stern, by pressing it very gently. It normally has to be soft and flat, if



it`s bumped over the stern level and it`s firm, then there could be a sign of a tumor.

Eczemas or injuries can be found easily if you blow some air under the feathers and you can check for any injuries or lumps on the bird`s skin. You can check for abscesses on the foot, which can be uncomfortable for your bird.

### **How to choose the right avian vet**

The best way to choose the right avian vet is by asking your friends, which already own birds for a longer period of time. When you call the vet, ask him if he is a bird expert.



### **What should you know, when you inform your vet**

Before visiting your vet, you have to be prepared with some information about your bird. You have to know your bird`s age, if not, an experienced vet will help you with this.

The vet will ask you a few questions like:

- Since how long do you own the bird?
- Where are they from?
- Do you have any other pets?
- You bought recently another bird?
- There was health problems in your family?
- Since when appeared the symptoms and what are the main signs of disease?

- The bird was treated before by you or by other vet?
- What kind of food you give to the bird?
- Did the bird participate in an exhibition show?
- There`s a member of your family sick ? (fever, diarrhea)

It`s very important to visit the same vet every time your bird presents health problems, because this way he can follow the bird`s evolution.

### **Microchipping your parrot**

Microchip is a very small electronic device encased in a glass chamber, about the size of a rice grain, which is inserted into a bird. When a scanner is passed over the area of the body containing the chip, it is activated and it transmits an identification number and the name of the chip manufacturer to the scanner`s display screen. The person scanning then using the manufacturers database will locate the contact informations of the owner. Make sure the scanned microchip number matches with the number on the computerized paper strip that goes in the brochure which the client takes home. You can also ask your avian vet to check periodically the proper functionality of the microchip. The microchip is implanted (on the left side) into the pectoral muscle of the bird or under the wings. The procedure is much like an injection and it last about 10 seconds; the chip is implanted through a hypodermic needle. It can be done without the use of anesthetics, but many vets prefer to anesthetize to ensure proper placement. If you are changing your address and phone number, don't forget to announce your vet or specialist from the animal shelter to register your new address. Microchips are not GPS devices, they're for the purpose of identifying founded birds. Birds which are founded and taken to the animal shelters are scanned for microchips before they`re adopted. It is recommended that you use a widely known

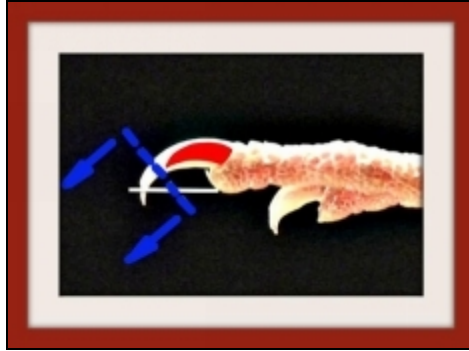
brand increasing the probability that a scanner for that brand is available.

### **How to take care of the beak and the nails of your parrot**

The bird`s beak and nails grow continuously, so you have to take care of them, throughout your bird`s life.



To prevent the beak to grow excessively you need to place a cuttlefish bone in the cage, which is also good as high calcium intake or you can cut back carefully with a strong pair of scissors. When trimming process is taking place, for a safer results ( to avoid injuries ) there`s need for two persons to hold the bird. Parrots have a predisposition for excessive beak growth, you'll have to cut it very often almost every four week. Because of the long beak parrots can`t eat properly and they could die because of that. Before trimming the beak, dab it with slightly warm glycerin or olive oil.



When nails overgrow, you need to cut them very carefully with a special scissor without causing any injuries. Overgrowth nails lead to instability on the perches or even the impossibility to walk. When trimming the nails it's best to cut off a little at a time. You have to know that the bird's nails contain (at the base of it) very fine blood vessels and nerves, which makes them very sensitive. If by mistake, you cut too much from the bird's nails, they will bleed and the bird will feel the same pain as we do when we over cut our nails. In this case you can stop the bleeding by using cotton buds soaked in vitamin K or C.



For a better result, when you cut the nails, you can grease your bird's fingers with comestible oil, to soften them.

## How to clip your parrot`s wings



If your parrot mostly lives in an aviary and you don't interact with it, then clipping the wing is unnecessary. The main purpose of wing clipping is to prevent rapid and upward flight. Wing clipping is safe if it is performed properly. If you don't know how to clip your bird's wing, the best way is to find an avian vet, who is experienced in the art of wing clipping. If you decide to do it by yourself then you'll have to study about the bird's wing shape and about terminology of its feathers. You'll also need a competent assistant who will help holding the bird. Avoid clipping the primary and secondary coverts, and secondary feathers on both wings. With the help of your assistant wrap the bird in a towel and hold it by the neck. Be careful the bird's chest must not be restricted because it can't breathe and carefully liberate one wing which has to be held at the base of the humerus and not by the feathers. If you don't hold the wing correctly, you can cause serious injuries, if the bird try to flap its wing. You can leave intact the last three primary feathers

(P10,P9,P8) and clip the next four primary feathers (P7,P6,P5,P4) or you can clip the first four primary feathers (P7,P8,P9,P10) and you can leave the other primary feathers intact. Do the same process on the other wing.

## **Bathing your parrot**

In the wild parrots can take a bathe in rainy days by opening their wings and tail sideways or they can have a bathe in little natural ponds on uneven ground.

In captivity, you have to provide different ways to keep your bird clean. You can spray them or you can give them a shower, but you should be careful because the upper respiratory tract and the sinuses are quite exposed. You can provide them artificial ponds by using not too deep water bowls or you can also use the sink or the bathtub. However your bird will still love to have a bathe in its drinking water bowl.



Sometimes your parrot will get dirty and greasy, in these kind of situations you'll have to use special shampoos. The best shampoos are those for the children. There are also several special products for your bird, but be careful of those which contains oils and perfumes, because your bird

could perceive them as detrimental substances and it may start to pull out his/her own feathers. You'll have to dilute a little bit of shampoo in the bathing water and easily sprinkle your bird with it until it become all wet. Leave the bird about five minutes in a warm place, then rinse it well with clean warm water. If your bird is excessively dirty ( oil, ink, liquid glue, etc..) then you'll have to visit your avian vet as soon as possible.

## **The special needs of the parrots**

### **Flying exercises**

Parrots belong to flying birds category, so they'll need to fly very often. So if you hold a small cage in your house, you'll have to assure them with almost daily flying exercises, to maintain their well being. A room with well closed windows will surely be enough for them. You have to avoid to agglomerate a small cage with lots of birds and toys. If you can't afford a bigger cage for them, you better stay at one pair of parrots, as long as they're two they will be alright.



Free fly exercising will prevent muscle atrophy of the wings and chest, and it will maintain the bird in a good physical condition.

When you leave the birds outside of the cage, serious precautions have to be taken, because your bird could be everywhere, for example

on the couch where it can be crashed, when he is hiding between the pillows.

Another important problem, is the kitchen for them, you don't have to leave the birds in the kitchen, especially when you are cooking, because they can fall into a hot pan from the cooker. They love to sit on top of the doors, so you have to be careful when you close the door of your room.

Before the first fly you have to place your bird close to the window to get used with it, otherwise it will try to fly through the window and serious accidents could happen. You can also cover the window with some curtains to avoid accidents. In the wild, parrots use to “work” to provide their food, to build their nest, to fly and care for young ones.

You'll have to make sure that your parrot will perform some exercises for five minutes, a few times every day.



Wing flapping: try to lower your hand up and down to encourage flapping. You can swing your parrot around in a circle or back and forth by making your bird to flap its wings a few times a day. You can also place a blanket on the floor and chase your parrot around. They`ll love this game.

You can also encourage your bird to dance with you and with your children. Your parrot will be very happy to dance



and jump around and also will become tired. Make sure that children and parrots are supervised.

## **Bedding materials**

In the wild the birds have less contact with their droppings, because they have unlimited space. In captivity, their droppings could affect the bird's health by distribution of microbes and parasites.

The loose sand or absorbent paper are the best bedding materials, you should avoid using newspaper, because it contains lead

(chemical substance), which could be dangerous for your bird.

Parrots will need daily portion of grit in their cage, to help with digestion, which will have to be changed daily because there will be droppings on them, and this way you can maintain your birds healthy life.

## **The everyday life of parrots**

During the day grey parrots will play by climbing on perches, sing or will wait for the owners to return home. In the wild parrots get up at sunrise and go to sleep at sunset.

In captivity you have to respect the day and night program of the bird. So you have to be sure that your bird will spend most of the day in a room exposed to light and for that you can place the cage close to the window.

At night time they will need a room without any illumination and noise source, to have a good sleep. If you stay up for long and you have to use the light in the same room where the birds are, you better cover the cage with a thin piece of curtain material to help them sleep. You can use that piece of material also in daytime, to cover the half part of the

cage, which will help the bird to take shelter from the direct sunlight when the weather is hot.

### **Inappropriate perches**

In the wild the birds sit on different sizes of branches, which are very comfortable for them. In captivity they spend almost all the time on the perch, which could be too slippery, too thick or too thin for the bird's feet. All this imperfections can cause swelling of the feet and deformities of the joints.



To avoid these problems, you can place big branches in the cage, but first you'll have to peel their bark and for disinfection you'll have to pour hot water on them. It's good to have different sized perches in the cage because it will stimulate the blood circulation and it will exercise the parrot's feet.

### **What you can do if your parrot is escaping from the cage**

#### **How to prevent the escape**



First of all you have to clip your parrot`s wings to avoid high altitude flights and to assure an easy landing on the floor. You must always make sure that all the windows are well shut. Don`t let out a bird if its wings are not clipped. When somebody is knocking at your door, before you open it, place the bird back in the cage. They could be scared sometimes when they see strangers and they can fly outside through the door.

Make sure that your parrot can`t get out of the cage, some birds are extremely intelligent and they're able to open the cage door with their beak, so you'll have to provide some locker for the cage door.

When your friends are visiting you at home, you better lock the cage for the bird`s sake, to avoid escaping through the open windows. In case that your bird could escape, you have to have some recent pictures taken with your parrot.

**What you can do if your parrot has already escaped**



If your bird just simply disappeared, then take the cage outside and put some fresh food and water in it, maybe your bird will try to return.

If your bird is on the nearest tree, then you can sprinkle some water on it with garden hose. Be careful, the overpressure of the water can cause serious injuries to your bird!

Be sure that you have all the necessary equipment at hand in case that the bird is reappearing: towels, cage, nest, etc... Contact your closest neighbours to give them detailed description about your missing parrot and make sure that everybody knows your address and phone number to contact you in case that they found your bird.

Make posters with the bird detailed description and place them on light posts as far as possible around your area on main and side roads, shop stores, churches. Your children can help you by offering posters to their colleagues at school.

Ring local vets and give them your phone number and pet details.

Walk around your local area calling your bird, don't forget that your bird is very scared and you'll have to call her very often, because even if s/he will hear you, s/he will not answer back to you for the first time. You'll have to return in the same places to call your bird again and again.

Drop your poster into letterboxes in your area.  
If you manage to find your bird, you'll have to visit your avian vet as soon as possible for a detailed examination and for wing clipping.



### **How to hand feed a baby parrot**



The maximum quantity which has to be given to a baby parrot before the weaning period has to be 10% of its body weight. The crop of the most baby parrots usually get empty between 4-6 hours. You'll have to stop feeding the bird during night time, between midnight and 6 o'clock, ( pause of 6 hours ), period which will allow the crop to empty of residual food. In this time you'll have enough time to get rest. As the baby parrot grows, you'll have to reduce the number of feeding times, but you'll have to increase a little bit more the quantity of food. The most important thing is to control the quantity of food offered at each meal. Don't offer more food than 10% of the bird's body weight in a meal. As the baby parrot grows, it will refuse to be hand feed and you'll have to stop with hand feeding or you'll have to reduce them. When you are at the stage of only 2-3 hand feedings, offer your bird solid food (softened pellets) or cooked food. In 2-3 weeks time, your bird should be able to get used with solid food and you can completely skip the evening meals.

## **How to administer medication to your parrot**

There are a few possible methods about how to administer medication to your parrot:

### **Adding medication in drinking water**

Adding medication in drinking water is a controversial method, but sometimes this is the only available method. The purpose is for the bird to take the medicine during the day directly from the drinking water. There are a lots of disadvantages of this method. The bitter taste of the water

makes the bird to refuse to drink it. Some birds will refuse to drink water, if its color has changed. Another disadvantage is that the water-medicine mixture has to be prepared and changed daily. There is a risk that your bird could dehydrate.

### **Adding medication in food**

This method is better than the one with water, because you can hide the medicine in the favorite food of your parrot. Usually you can mix suspensions (liquid medicines), tablets or the content of a capsule in food.

The disadvantage of this method is that the bird could refuse to eat the food mixed with medicine, because it changed the food taste. It could be difficult to mix the medicine with the food , because of the hard consistency of the medicine, and could be needed to add some water to softened the medicine.

The other disadvantage is, if there are several birds in the cage, all the others may eat from the medicine-food mixture. If a healthy bird is more authoritative, it could eat most of the food- medicine mixture, while the sick bird will receive too little.

### **Liquid medication (Suspensions)**



This is the best method to administer liquid medication to your bird directly through the beak. The most oral suspensions are accepted very well by the birds, especially those with good taste.

You'll have to follow the next procedure:

Fill the syringe or pipette with the prescribed quantity of suspension. There should be no needle on the syringe.

Before you try restraining your bird, it's worth seeing if s/he will accept the suspension from the syringe through the cage bars. If not, you'll have to take out your parrot from its cage and wrap it in a towel, only the head and the chest of the bird will be uncovered and the chest also needs to be able to rise and fall in order for your bird to breathe. Before you start to administer the suspension, you'll have to wait until the bird calms down. You'll have to place the syringe at the left or right side of the beak, (it's possible that bird will bite it at first) and after you managed to place it in the interior of the beak, you can administer the suspension very slowly. You'll have to allow the bird to swallow frequently, because if you squeeze the suspension too fast, the medicine can get into the lungs and the bird could die.

It's possible to observe that the suspension is getting out through the nostrils of the bird. Don't panic, just stop giving any medicine to your bird and leave it to calm down. Try to



call your avian vet and tell him about what happened. If you can't reach your avian vet, then don't administer any medicine to your bird at that moment, until you speak with a specialized avian vet.

## **Injectable medications**

Another method to administering medication is through repeated injections. Usually this kind of method is not used very often, (only in emergency cases) because the bird is exposed at repeated stress because of the pain.

## **Vitamins and minerals excess or deficiency**

The insufficient or too much quantity of vitamin intake can cause serious health problems to the birds. The owners have to assure them an optimal intake of vitamins and minerals.

### **Vitamin B complex:**

Sources: cereal germs, rice bran, raw egg yolk, carrots, oranges ...

Diseases: the bird's head loss in a side or back;

-avitaminosis B1: nerve problems, paralysis, spasms

Properties: it's given during hatching period, in growth period, in prolonged treatments with antibiotics, to protect the intestinal flora;

- B5- in circulation disorders;
- B12- in period of growth, agitation and depression;

Administration: in liquid form, a couple of drops through the beak or in drinking water

### **Vitamin A**

Vitamin A deficiency is considered the main cause of diseases at cage birds. In the bird's body, the carotene is

transformed in vitamin A.

Sources: provitamin A: fish grease, egg yolk, carrots, green plants, vegetables, sunflower seeds;

Diseases: avitaminosis A: drying of the surface of the eyeball, infections of the mucous membranes, rhinitis, sinusitis, white membranes in the beak, kidney problems and gout (gout occurs in birds when uric acid levels becomes too high in their blood stream), swollen feet, diarrhoea;

Properties: protects the mucous membranes, the eyes and skin;

Administration: fish grease 3-4 drops through the beak;

### **Vitamin C**

Sources: green plants, bananas, grapes, blackcurrant, rose hips, parsley;

Diseases: the fragility of very small blood vessels, hematomas, tiredness;

Properties: increases immunity, strengthens the capillary wall;

Administration: feeding with green plants

### **Vitamin D**

Sources: green plants, egg yolk, fish flour, beer yeast;

Diseases: slowing growth, rachitis, bone fragility, calcium deposits, lack or softening of the egg shell;

Administration: fish grease- first a few drops through the beak, then mixed with food ;

### **Vitamin K**

Sources: hemp seeds

Diseases: slow clotting - prolonged bleedings in subcutaneous tissue;

Properties: it`s important in blood clotting;

### **Vitamin E**

Sources: maize, wheat germ, yolk, butter, vegetables;

Diseases: decrease of fecundity - atrophy of embryo in egg;

## **First aid kit for your parrot**

It's very important to have a first aid kit in your house, because sadly accidents could happen sometimes. First, you'll have to call your avian vet, but you have to be ready to use your first aid kit in case that your bird require immediate medical care in cases like burn or injury of one of the wings.



The first aid kit has to contain the following items:

- electric birds pillow, to warm up the bird to treat shocks; in case that your bird is very sick don't leave it unattended on the pillow, because there is a danger of overheating.
- Pedialyte (electrolyte solution for children), these kind of solution has to be given at room temperature
- eye drops (medication) and eye wash (to clean the eyes)
- eyedropper
- cotton swabs and balls to clean the open wound
- scissors
- gauze rolls to bandage scratches, burns or open wounds
- tweezers to remove broken blood feathers
- antiseptic wipes

- betadine or iodine solution
- medical tape
- masking tape
- 3% hydrogen peroxide solution to clean wounds. When you clean the wound for the first time, you'll have to use the undiluted form of the solution. After that you'll have to dilute the hydrogen peroxide solution with water 1:10.
- medical first aid pen flashlight, to see inside of the bird's mouth
- antibiotic ointment to prevent infection of cuts and scratches
- syringe (without needle on top), feeding tubes, pipettes. You have to be well prepared before you use feeding tubes.
- towels
- hand feeding formula (mature birds can get 5% of their body weight at one feeding, once or twice per day.
- latex gloves
- animal poison control center phone number
- magnifying glass
- heating lamp
- bird`s medical records
- parrot`s first aid book

## **Trauma at parrots**



The main cause of the diseases suffered by birds is the accidents. The birds left unattended can hit the windows or cut themselves in different kind of objects.

When the bird suffered a trauma without bleeding, then it has to calm down and stay in warmth.

When the bird is bleeding, for example, when breaking a leg or wing, first you have to stop the bleeding, then you have to calm the bird down. When the bird suffered a cranial trauma, you don't have to place it in a warm place, because he will need a dark and quiet place.

To stop the bleeding you'll need to apply a cotton cloth on the wound, by pressing it for

5 - 10 minutes. The cotton cloth soaked in vitamin K, is more efficient. Cuts and scratches must be cleaned with iodine.

If your bird is covered with a grease substance, then you have to wash and dry it or you can apply some talcum powder on it.

In all the above situations try to find a vet as soon as possible.

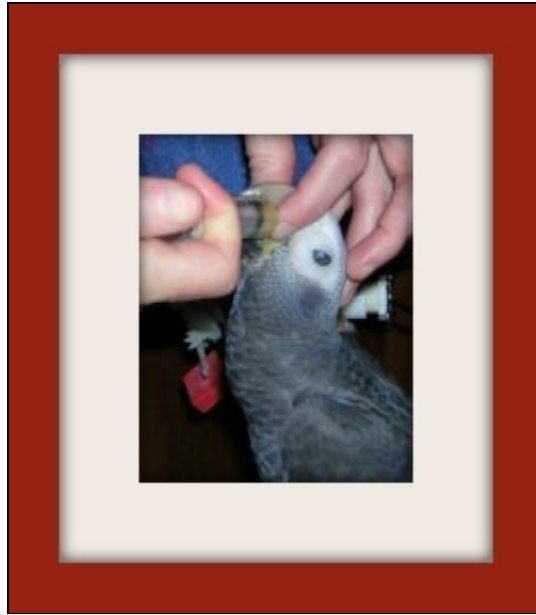
## **Poor general condition**



The normal body temperature of the birds is 105.8 degrees Fahrenheit (41 degrees Celsius). When they get sick, the body temperature drops to much, that`s why you need to measure your bird's body temperature, when you observe this kind of problems. All you have to do, is to increase the bird's body temperature, when it`s too low. You'll have to cover one part of the cage with a thick towel, then you'll have to place a desk lamp with a 75 - 100 W bulb at 10 cm close to the bird. The room has to be heated, the temperature could be between 77- 95 degrees Fahrenheit (25 - 35 degrees Celsius).

## **Forced feeding**

When the birds are sick they usually refuse to eat, this could be a big problem because they can't survive for long without food.



It is therefore necessary to force your bird to eat, with viscous consistency mashed food, which is given little by little, with a syringe without needle on top. You can feed your parrot for 3-4 times per day with approximately 5-10 ml of liquid food. If you don't know how to feed your bird you better ask your avian vet to show you how to forced feed your bird. Because forced feeding is very stressing for birds, it has to be done just in case that the bird hasn't eat for 2-3 days.

## **Parasites**

### **External parasites**



External parasites or ectoparasites can be divided into lice, mites and the rest. Lice infestations appears as small, brownish colored insects that can be seen moving through your bird's feathers. Sometimes you can't see lice with your naked eyes, you just simply notice excessive itching in your bird. Parrot lice lay their eggs at the base of the feather and the egg developing period last until 6 weeks.

The most common mite seen on birds is *Cnemidocoptes*- the Scaly Face / Leg mite, which feeds on keratin, the protein that makes up the surface layer of the skin, beak and feet. Left untreated the Scaly Face mite can cause disruption of the growth areas of the beak, leading to distortion of the beak. Thickening of the scales on the legs can lead to pain. In massive infestation appears the total or partial loss of feathering.

The combat of parasites can be done with treatments with Ivermectin or Moxidectin, which can be applied on the skin on the back of the neck or put in the bird`s drinking water. This type of parasites don't have any affects on humans. *Syringophilus bipectinatus* which feed on feather and skin excess and they can be located between live feathers brushes and tail feathers. May occur malformation of feathers, which could be treated with Ivermectin.



Dermanyssus gallinae, the red bird mite appears mostly at aviary birds, which do not live on the bird's body. During the day, they are hiding in cracks and crevices around aviaries. Massive infestation takes place during summer. The treatment must be done with insecticides in aviary, before the birds were previously moved, after disinfection you need to rinse the aviary with water. The birds will be treated with powder which contains Pyrethrum. Decontamination will be repeated after 7 days. To prevent parasites reinfestation after you finished the prescribed treatment with your bird, you'll have to thoroughly clean the bird's cage by disinfecting all its surfaces, corners and bars of the cage.

### **Scab at parrots**

This disease could produce scratching and pecking at parrots.

It starts with feather loss, first from the tail, then from the back, at the joints level appear some spongy white - ash deposits.

The treatment is made with sulphur - based ointments, which should be applied after removing the crusts, with Vaseline, warm water and soap. The treatment has to be repeated after 8 days.

### **Internal parasites**

#### **Toxoplasmosis:**

Symptoms: fever, respiratory dysfunction, diarrhoea, paresis, paralysis, convulsion;

Treatments: disinfection through flaming, sulfonamides, antibiotics;

It could be prevented by disinfection of cats.

### **Coccidiosis:**

It could affect youth between 10 days and three month, diarrhoea which turn in red colour;

Treatment: administration of polivitamines, sulfonamides, vitamin K, antibiotics;

Maintaining hygiene prevents diseases.

### **Histomoniasis:**

Symptoms: excrements of yellow colour, walking disorders by the inflammation of the joints;

Treatments: administration of dimetridazole, polivitamines;

It can be prevented by the control of humidity.

### **Ascariasis:**

It could affect youth of 3-4 months old.

Symptoms: weakening, diarrhoea, hypovitaminosis;

Treatments: disinfection through flaming, soft food, albendazole;

Disinfection of adult birds.

## **Skin and feather problems**



**Massive molting** represents the slow growth process of feathers. The affected birds have broken and disintegrated feathers.

There are multiple causes, food deficiency (the lack of amino acids, vitamins and minerals ), improper maintenance (insufficient light and humidity ), liver or kidney disease, tumour or hormonal disorders.

**Soft molting** it's a permanent or partial feather loss of the bird. The most important causes are high level of humidity, with light and food deficiency.

**French molting** is characterized by the continuous growth and falls of feathers without the possibility to manage to cover all parts of the bird's body. There are a few possible causes that produces the french molt, like viruses (Polyoma or Circoviruses, which have the potential to inflame feather follicles), environment changes, heredity, parasites and nutrition problems. If you notice patches of bare skin on your bird's body or molting process is not running smoothly, you should visit your avian vet as soon as possible.

## **Inflammation of the skin ( Dermatitis )**

Inflammation of the skin could appear among with other diseases like renal diseases with increasing level of uric acid in the blood, liver disease or infestation with external parasites.

You can use the following therapeutic measures:

- applying astringent and disinfection solution on the wet wounds. Do not use ointments, because the feathers will become greasy and the bird could chew its wounds.
- there are injections with antibiotics which stops the bacterial infestations. Injections with multivitamins and immune system boosters can help the bird to fight against diseases.
- in case that there is a itchiness problem, it would be recommended to use some special anesthetic powder for

external use, on the affected areas on the skin. In this case the

skin will be anaesthetised and the itchiness should disappear.

- when there are the possibility of massive bleedings (because the bird is scratching too much the affected areas) a collar should be applied around the bird's neck. In some cases the bird won't be happy to support the collar, especially if the itchiness was caused by physical problems (stress), and maybe this solution (collar) will not resolve the problem.

### **Xanthomas (Fatty tumors)**

Xanthoma is a skin disease which affects overweight birds, especially parrots. Beneath the skin there are deposits of fatty tumors, which have yellowish color and they can be found in chest area, the wing tips, and in ventral and femoral regions (between the legs and around the vent). These encapsulated benign tumors are composed of mature fat cells. The affected areas can be easily damaged or ulcerated, especially as it gets bigger. Birds will cause self-trauma by picking at them. Xanthoma is a very common disease at birds which are fed exclusively on seeds. You'll need to introduce in the bird's diet some millet, fruits, herbs, green leafy veggies.

Once the bird get all the necessary food, the existent fatty deposits will stop developing. The eczema should be disinfected with an antiseptic solution.

### **Skin tumors (Lipomas)**

Skin tumors can appear at all species of birds. The most common tumors are lipomas which are fatty tumors that can develop beneath the skin, and could appear on the stomach or chest area, it also can develop internally.

A common cause of lipomas is obesity and vitamin E deficiency. The proper treatment is low-fat diet. If the lipoma is big and painful or infected your vet will surgically remove the tumor, because this is the best option for your bird's health.

## **The appetite and the digestive system**

### **The bird doesn't want to eat and drink**

If your bird refuse to eat and drink, then its life is in danger. The loss of appetite indicate an illness of internal organs, which could be very dangerous. In this case you'll need to contact your avian vet as soon as possible.

### **The bird eats too much**

Some birds have very big appetite, but they'll remain still skinny, because they suffer from parasitic infestation with acarians - *Dermanyssus gallinae*.

In this situation you'll have to clean the cage or aviary and the bird's internal and external disinfection is required. You need to offer them some hemp and poppy seeds, and iron sulphate in water.

### **When the bird has diarrhoea**

When a bird has diarrhoea, the droppings are very soft even fluids, with a smell different from normal. The frequency of elimination of droppings will be very high.

Diarrhoea leads to dehydration of the bird and to loss of minerals of the organism. There are multiple causes:

- inadequate nutrition ( bad quality )
- bacterial infection of the intestines
- intoxications

- parasites

The required treatment is focused on anti diarrheal diet and specific medication for each situation.

You will need to feed your bird with some poppy seeds, because of their calming effect;

boiled rice; some fried seeds and replace water with mint tea. You can add to mashed boiled rice some coal powder.

Antidiarrheal medication will be followed after your avian vet advice. You can also offer to your bird instead of water a special solution which contains minerals and it could be prepared at pharmacies:

NaCl (sodium chloride)	8,0 g
CaCl <sub>2</sub> (calcium chloride)	0,13 g
KCl (potassium chloride)	0,2 g
MgCl (magnesium chloride)	0,1 g
NaH <sub>2</sub> PO <sub>4</sub> (monosodium phosphate)	0,05 g
NaHCO <sub>3</sub> (sodium bicarbonate)	10 g
Glucose	1,0 g
Distilled water	1000,0 ml

It's very important to separate your bird from the others, to assure an adequate temperature of the room 77 - 95 degrees Fahrenheit (25 - 35 degrees Celsius) and a very strict hygiene.

## **Enteritis (Inflammation of the intestines)**

Enteritis represent the inflammation of the intestines and it's one of the most frequent cause of mortality at cage and aviary birds.

The main causes of enteritis are:

Nutrition

Bad quality food; inadequate composition of the food;

Intoxications

Toxic plants, lead, etc...

Intestinal parasites

Tapeworms, eelworms, coccidia can harm the intestinal mucus;

Viruses

There are different kind of viruses: Paramyxoviruses and hepatitis viruses, which can also cause enteritis;

Bacterial infections

Salmonellosis and E. coli are pathogenic bacterias which are the main causes of the enteritis. The main symptom of the enteritis is diarrhoea. The feathers around the cloaca are dirty, the bird is lethargic, sad and sleeps too much.

Because it has lost too much liquid, the affected bird will drink much water. Laboratory investigations ( bacteriological and parasitological analyses) will have to be done to discover the main cause of the enteritis. Meanwhile, the bird has to be placed in a warm place, it will need infusions and forced feeding. Injection with vitamins will strengthen the immune system of the bird. The avian vet will prescribe the proper antibiotics treatments for your bird.

### **Gastrointestinal parasites - Tapeworms**



Tapeworms which lives in the bird's body, eliminate their eggs through the bird's feces. The eggs are consumed by

intermediate hosts (earthworms, snails and insects like grasshoppers, ants, beetles, flies, etc...). Inside of the intermediate hosts a small embryo develops in the eggs but does not hatch immediately. When the bird is eating the infected insects or worms the larvae in the egg reaches infective stage within two to three weeks and they will become tapeworms in the bird's body. Wild parrots are infested with tapeworms when they eat insects and worms directly from the wild. Wild parrots which were recently imported (captured from the wild) could have a prophylactic treatment against the tapeworm with Praziquantel. Infestation with tapeworms is uncommon in domestically raised parrots.

### **Capillaria ( Capillary or Threadworms)**

There are several species of Capillaria and can be found in the lower intestinal tract causing severe inflammation of it. Disinfection of the cage and accessories is required with hot water and treatments with Hygromycin may be used.

### **Constipation**

The signs of constipation are the enlarged abdomen of the bird, and the missing fresh droppings on the cage floor. The impossibility of elimination of droppings leads to intoxication. The general state of the bird is getting worse, it will have slovenly aspect.

In this situation, the cloacal orifice free opening is needed by administering few drops of castor oil through the bird's beak, for two-three days. The bird will need a warm place and for the next few days the diet will contain honey, green plants and fruits.



## **Obesity**

Fat birds has balloon aspect body and they are moving too slow. The muscle of the chest is covered with fat layer and you can't feel the sternum at all. Obesity could lead to health problems like heart and circulatory system disorders, joints problems, modification of the internal organs like liver fattening and constipation. The major problems are the impossibility of flying, loneliness, and overfeeding with flax and rape seeds.

The main measures that must be taken are the introduction of lettuce in the bird's diet and increase the frequency of free fly in the room.

You can replace the drinking water with dandelion tea, for 20 days. The obese bird will have to receive only half part of the usual daily seeds portion. Green food and fruits can be offered daily.

## **Excessive weight loss**

The excessive weight loss of the bird could have multiple causes like nutritional and parasitical problems. The suffering bird has dry skin and a very prominent breastbone. When you observe these symptoms, you'll have to disinfect the cage and the bird, and get droppings samples for further examinations. Your avian vet will inform you with a right diagnose and will establish the treatment.

## **Inflammation of the crop**

The inflammation of the crop usually appears because of bacterial, fungal or parasitic infections. The dirty drinking water from the bowls can be the cause of the infection. If the water bowls are not cleaned at least once per day with hot water, then toxic mosses and

dirt could form in the recipients. The affected bird is vomiting and the feathers on the bird's head are dirty and sticky. The affected bird could also suffer from diarrhoea and become very somnolent and lethargic. You'll have to increase the body temperature of the bird with a heating lamp. The avian vet will prescribe anti-inflammatory medication which has to be administered through the beak. Before the treatment with antibiotics laboratory investigations should be made for a precise diagnosis. In this period the affected bird diet is based on soft food: boiled eggs, biscuit soaked in water, boiled rice, etc... If the bird doesn't want to eat, you'll have to force feed it. Even if the bird has recovered you'll have to take care of him/her a few weeks after, otherwise it will get sick again. You can warm up the bird when it's needed and injection with vitamin A is required.

## **Liver diseases**

### **Inflammation of the liver (Hepatitis)**

The affected birds look tired, lethargic and with lack of appetite. The affected liver is not able to help much the body with detoxification. Most birds suffer from itching, and feather plucking. Because of the inflammation of the liver, can appear inflammation of the bird's skin, the urine color is white and the feces are greenish-yellow. The main factors that triggers acute chronic hepatic inflammations are bacterias, viruses, funguses, parasites or intoxications. The liver is increasing in size, but it's an organ with incredible regeneration power if the disease is discovered in time. If the hepatic tissue is very affected, then it can't regenerate and we talk about cirrhosis of the liver. The therapy of the cirrhosis is impossible. The evolution of it can be stopped when it is recognized in time. Treatments with

liver protection medication could be done. The possible cause could be the perishable oily seeds. Hazelnut mould (*Aspergillus flavus*) which is forming in wet weather on the nut's shell, are extremely toxic for the liver. You'll have to check the quality of the nuts before you offer it to your bird, by tasting them. Try to use brands that are sold with success in stores and supermarkets, this way you'll have the chance to buy fresh nuts.

## **Fatty liver**

It's a disease which appears especially at overweight birds. The accumulation of excess fat in the liver cells makes the liver to work improperly. The nails and the beak are overgrown, diarrhoea and respiratory difficulties are the main symptoms. When the liver increases too much in size, the tissue of the liver could break up and internal bleeding could appear, causing death. To avoid these kind of unfortunate situations, slow weight loss is needed, by reducing the consume of oily seeds, administration of vitamin E and liver protection medication and lots of exercise (outdoor flying) to regenerate the liver function.

## **Beak's health problems**

### **Deformed beak**



When the owners don't offer cuttlefish bone to their birds, then their beak will overgrow, which will lead to the impossibility of the bird to feed and drink. If the beak it's not cut back in appropriate time, the bird could die, due to impossibility to feed itself. When the bird feeds mostly soft food instead of seeds, then it doesn't use sufficiently the upper and lower parts of it's beak. You'll have to replace the soft food with the right diet and offer some tree branches to your bird for chewing. Some owners use to cut their parrot's beak even if it's unnecessary, this way they will accelerate the growing process of the beak. The abnormal growth of the beak, in some cases, could be because of a more serious health disorder.

### **Soft beak**

The beak of some birds becomes very flexible because of the vitamins and calcium deficiency. In this case, the bird will need soft food, you'll have to grease the bird's beak with vitamin A and some calcium and crushed egg shells administration is required. The main cause is vitamins A, C, biotin, pantothenic acid, folic acid and calcium or phosphorus deficiency. Sometimes on the beak could appear some exfoliations which looks like scales. You'll have to grease the beak with cod-liver oil or with vitamin A.

### **Injuries of the beak**

At birds which suffer from malformed beak, from vitamins and calcium or phosphorus deficiency, the beak could break very easily even when they try to break the nut`s shells. Administration of soft food, fruits, calcium, vitamin A application on the beak with a piece of cotton - wool, and a professional remediation of the broken beak made by an avian vet will give good results. But injuries of the beak could happen because of the accidents. There are several ways to reconstitute malformed or injured beaks. Prosthetic beaks are made by inserting pins into the bone of the existing beak which is then covered by a dental acrylic material and shaped.

### **Trichomoniasis parasites**

Parasites called *Trichomonas gallinae* live in the sinuses, mouth, throat, esophagus and other organs. The most common symptom is a yellow or brownish cheese-like growth in the mouth, at the base of the tongue, in the crop and can cause respiratory insufficiency. Is the most common disease of pigeons and wild doves. *Trichomonas gallinae* is very contagious disease and can spread through the beak (when they feed each other), food and drinking water. If the disease is recognized in time (is located only in the crop and the mouth), then immediate treatment with Dimetridazole is required. Your local avian vet will prescribe the right dosage. The cage and the accessories must be disinfected with hot water.

### **Respiratory system problems**

The loud whistling sounds, hard breathing of the bird indicates a problem with it`s respiratory system. The birds

are very sensitive at air currents and they get cold very easy. To prevent this kind of problems, you'll need to find a proper place for the cage.

When you hear this whistling noises, you'll need to feed the bird with grated carrots and fruits and green plants rich in vitamin C.

The avian vet help is needed to prescribe the right antibiotics for the bird.

Another respiratory problem is, when the bird is breathing with the open beak. In this case the bird`s tracheas are infested with a parasitic worm, called *Syngamus trachealis*.

## **Acute respiratory insufficiency**

Respiratory insufficiency is a symptom which usually appears at many and different kind of health disorders. Respiratory difficulties can develop after the modification of the internal organs which are pressing the air ways. When the thyroid gland increases in size, it can restrain the air ways. All the internal organs are situated in the same cavity of the body (thoracic cavity and the stomach are not separated by a diaphragm as at mammals), and the modification of the internal organs may influence negatively the respiratory functions. The normal function of the air sacs and the lungs is affected by the increase of the liver, by obesity, sexual disorders and accumulation of excrements as a result of digestive diseases. When it`s a slow evolution process of the disease, the affected bird is flying less, not singing and sleeps too much. After all, the bird will lose its strength, yawns very often, because of the lack of oxygen. The affected bird is breathing rapidly with open beak. If the bird is not taken in time to the vet for consultation and treatment, the bird could suffocate.

## **Abundant nose secretions**

The secretion which appears at nose area indicates that the bird is cold sick. You can maintain the bird's body temperature by covering it with a piece of cotton cloth. There are lots of secretions in the nose when the bird is suffering from mycotic, bacterial and viral infestations. You have to avoid the contact of your bird with other wild birds and you'll have to feed the bird with soft food, seeds soaked in milk, honey and chamomile tea. Vitamins A, C, and B complex intake is needed.

## **Rhinitis**

Rhinitis is an inflammation of the nostrils. The feathers around the nostrils are dirty, because of the abundant nose secretion. The nasal discharge can form a crust and can block the nasal orifices. The bird rubs his head on perches and different objects of the cage to liberate his/her affected nostrils. The main cause of rhinitis is infection with viruses, bacterias or mycoplasmosis. Rhinitis is transmissible from parrot to human.



For this reason, the avian vet will administer an injection with antibiotic (Tetracycline). In case that the infection is

resistant to Tetracycline, laboratory investigation is needed to find the proper antibiotic for the bird. Injections with Poly Vitamins are also indicated and vitamin C (powder) in water

(a pinch of vitamin C powder in 30 ml of water) added in drinking water to fight the infection. The nostrils and the feathers around it will have to be cleaned with cotton wool soaked in warm water, few times per day. The inflamed and red skin around the nostrils have to be greased with a special ointment, which contains fish grease, marigold (*Calendula officinalis*) and vitamin A. Because the body temperature of the bird drops, you'll have to warm it up, by placing a heat lamp or bulb (60-100W) near the cage. The "warming up " procedure has to be done until the bird is recovering.



You can also place a bowl filled with hot chamomile infusion in front of the cage. You'll have to cover the cage with a towel and try to direct the hot streams inside the cage. You can apply this method once or twice per day. Disinfection with hot water of the perches, feeding and drinking bowls is required. Rhinitis could affect those birds which live in preheated rooms, especially during winter. Because of the dry air, the bird's airways become affected. To control the humidity of the room, you can place a wet towel on the radiator, there are also special humidifying equipments or you may also offer your bird the opportunity to have baths



every day. You can also spray your bird daily with warm water.

## **Sense organs problems**

### **The eyes**

The bird`s eyes problems could have noninfectious and infectious causes. Non infectious diseases are swollen eyelids

( blepharitis ), glaucoma, conjunctivitis, cataracts and traumas.

Infectious eye diseases could appear in ornithosis, avian mycoplasmosis or chlamydiosis.

Non infectious eye problems could be treated with vitamin A (drops) applied on the eyes with cotton buds. You can also clean the eyes with chamomile tea.

### **The ears**

There are rare cases of ears infections at birds. Usually, the bird is continuously scratching the infected ear, which means that the interior area is inflamed. The bird frequently shake its head and hold its head on one side. You'll have to apply in each ear one drop of boroglycerine. If the symptoms still persist, then visit your avian vet for antibiotic prescription.

## **Reproduction problems**

## The retention of the egg



A frequent problem at cage birds is the retention of the egg. If the hen can't lay the egg, it could over press the internal organs, the impossibility of eliminate droppings, and that could lead to self intoxication. It could happen because of the age of the bird, the size and shape of the egg, the sudden drops of temperature 53.6 degrees Fahrenheit (12 degrees Celsius) and the stress during the egg laying process. At the first signs of the retention of the egg, the wet heat will help in most of the cases. You'll have to place a bowl filled with hot water in front of the cage, which must be covered with a towel and the hot steams have to be directed towards the cage. A heating lamp or bulb (60 W) will be necessary near the cage and directed towards the suffering bird. You can also help your bird by introducing 0,5-1 ml of warm oil in the cloacal orifice of the bird. This operation should continue each hour until the egg is delivered. In this case, for the bird's safe, the vet intervention is required. The temperature in the room has to be maintained around 86 degrees Fahrenheit (30 degrees Celsius).

## **Infertility of the cock**



One of the main cause of the infertility of the cock is the unsuitable partner and for this reason the birds need to be watched during mating period. The stress, inadequate feeding, too young and too old age of the birds could be the reason of the infertility.

During mating period, the cock`s diet should increase with vitamin E.

## **Nervous system problems**

### **Dizzy bird**

The bird can`t hold itself on the perch and could fall and hurt causing serious injuries.

During the flight they can't appreciate the right distance. To avoid accidents, the floor of the cage must be covered with

a thin piece of cloth. The free flight must be stopped until the clarification of the causes.



### **Twirling or Torticollis**

It's a frequent disease which appears mostly at smaller cage birds. They constantly throw their head back, go around in circle, turn their heads around in a circle and look up.

If there are cerebral diseases, then the bird needs to stay in a dark and quiet place on a piece of soft cloth.

There could be several causes:

- infections with viruses, bacteria, parasites, mycoplasma- administration of antibiotics is needed
- intoxication with lead, insecticides - administration of antidote is required
- injuries and brain hemorrhage
- avitaminosis A and lack of calcium - administration of necessary substances
- brain tumors

### **Diseases of the feet**

## **Abscess of the feet**



The main cause of this disease are the circulatory disorders of the feet caused by insufficient movement, inappropriate perches, avitaminosis A (too little green food and fruits). First the abscess forms on the heel or under a toe (a pressure zone). The skin become very thin, the wound appears and soon it will be covered with crust. The affected feet is swollen and it`s very warm. The wound become an open injury filled with pus. The crust has to be removed surgically and the affected foot will be treated with ointment bandage and s/he need to be looked after for 10 days. The bandage has to be changed at every 2-3 days. Injection with multivitamins stimulates the healing process. To spare the other foot, the perches will have to be wrapped with paper towel or with bandages and they have to be fixed at the end of perches with adhesive tape. All the perches available in the cage have to be wrapped, because the bird will hesitate to sit on the unwrapped perches, because s/he is scared of them.

If there are not pustules filled with pus on the bird`s foot, it`s enough to use ointment with vitamin A or with fish

grease daily. During this treatment the presence of the grit is not necessary, because it will stick on the bird`s foot and it will stop the healing process.

Offer your bird the opportunity to fly free every day for 1-2 hours. This way the circulatory system and the blood circulation in the feet will be stimulated. The lack of movement and overweight of the bird has negative effects on the feet.

## **Accidents and injuries of the limb**

### **Sprains and dislocations**

Sprains appears after the wrong manipulation of the bird or its leg is stuck between the bars.

The affected joints are inflamed causing pain and increase in volume of the affected area. In the case of sprains, the treatment consists in application of a bandage with wool balls soaked in alcohol and the settlement of the bird in quiet place.

In the case of a dislocation, re-suspend the ends of joints in the initial position and then maintain them in this position by applying around the hip joint an adhesive tape.

You can feed your bird with poppy and hemp seeds, and an everyday observation of the bird is required.

### **Fractures**

Fractures appear as a result of accidents through manipulation or bumping of the bird.

The leg is dragged and the opposite extremity of the fracture moves. The affected area is turgid, much bigger, infiltrated with blood and lymph. If the fracture is open, then it can be observed the rupture of the muscle and skin, with the visibility of the bones.

The stages of the treatment are:

-the treatment has to be done in maximum 48 hours from the accident

- calming the pain with infiltration of pain killer
- disinfection of the area with ethacridine lactate ( Rivanol solution )
- removal of the impurities
- immobilization of the area
- attach a collar around the bird`s head to prevent tearing the bandage
- administration of antibiotics and vitamins, daily
- supervision of the evolution of the fracture

The advantage of surgical operation compared with traditional method is that the fracture can be more perfectly remediate.

## **Gout**

When uric acid level becomes too high in the bird's blood stream, then gout occurs. Birds usually don't produce too much urine. The uric acid is removed from the blood by the kidneys and eliminated through the urine. When the kidneys don't work properly, the level of uric acid becomes too high in the blood stream and it will become crystallized. In articular gout the uric acid crystallizes in the joints, ligaments and tendon sheaths, forming white nodules which could be very painful. The feet are swollen and become red-violet color. When the uric acid crystallizes in tissues, it will form small, white nodules. In visceral gout, uric acid deposits are found in the liver, kidneys, spleen and air sacs. High dose of vitamin A, lots of fluids may be given and stimulation of renal function by adding in drinking water sucrose

( sugar) could positively influence the evolution of disease. Because of the swollen feet and painful nodules the bird may be unable to perch and so it will remain on the floor of the cage. The food and water bowls should be placed to be easily accessible locations, by helping the bird to be able to eat and drink without any problem. The perches have to be wrapped with paper towels and the cage has to contain little wrapped platforms to help the bird to sit comfortable. Nodules could be eliminated surgically when they have a specific size. In this case it's not recommended anesthesia, because it could harm the affected kidneys.

## **Intoxications of the cage birds**

**Intoxication with: - disinfection substances:** the bird has difficulty in breathing, it has discoloured eyes. The bird's life is in danger!

**-soap or deodorants:** they contain a substance which could lead to temporary blindness. Washing the affected area with cold water.

**- alcohol:** the bird is vomiting, it has fluffy feathers, stays in the corner of the cage, it's losing balance. The sick and old birds could die; the healthy bird could recover by itself.

**-toxic plants:** digestive symptoms, diarrhoea. You need to assure green plants in your bird's diet.

**-nicotine ( cigarette butts ):** it can affect the nervous system, causing death. Don't leave cigarettes near the birds.

**-salt ( any salty food ):** the bird is very thirsty, it is agitated and shaking. You'll need to administrate lots of water through the bird's beak; laxatives; in severe situations, the bird could die.

**-teflon (from frying pans):** suffocation and death in 30 minutes. Avoid keeping the



bird in the kitchen; in case of accidents remove the bird outside as fast as possible.

**-lead ( newspapers, lead-based paint):** green coloured diarrhoea (even the presence of blood), the kidneys, the bone`s marrow and the nervous system are affected. If the accident is discovered in time, the administration of an antidot is required - calcium EDTA ( aminopolycarboxylic acid ).

The major intoxications take place when the birds, swallow the toxic substances. The owner could offer some milk with a dropper and after that, the bird will start vomiting in short time.

Another solution is the administration of medicinal coal. You'll have to dissolve 5 grams of medicinal coal in 50 ml of water. This preparation will need to be administered through the beak. Once you have made the operations described above, after one hour, you'll have to administer some oily purgatives, oil or castor oil.

### **Birds diseases which could affect humans**

**Allergies of humans at fluffs and feathers:** the affected persons are sneezing, on the skin they present eruptions or bouts of asthma; it triggers allergic sinusitis. You'll have to avoid birds breeding.

**Tuberculosis ( mycobacterium avium ):** it`s very rare at humans. Healthy people usually do not contact the disease from the birds, just those with immunodeficiency. Tuberculosis is a treatable disease at humans. It could affect the birds ( very rare ), it has bad general condition, weakness, nodules on organs.

**Ornithosis; Psittacosis; Chlamydiosis; Chlamydia**

**Psittaci:** it is transmissible through the air, it`s like influenza with 104 degrees Fahrenheit (40 degrees Celsius) fever, the incubation period is 10 days. It could be treated

with antibiotics at humans.

The symptoms at affected birds are fever, somnolence, breathing problems and diarrhoea. It can be treated with antibiotics at birds as well.

**Viruses; Orthomyxoviruses; Paramyxoviruses:** the Orthomyxoviruses are the symptoms of influenza; Paramyxoviruses are the cause of conjunctivitis and signs of flu. The treatment at humans is made by supporting the body functions with the appropriate medication. At birds the symptoms are: **bird pest** caused by Orthomyxoviruses; and **nervous symptoms** caused by Paramyxoviruses. The treatment at birds is made by a specialised avian vet.

**Bacteriosis ( Salmonella, Klebsiella pneumoniae ):** digestive problems at humans. The treatment consist in administration of antibiotics after a laboratory examination. At birds there are digestive problems as well. The administration of antibiotics is required, after a laboratory examination.

### **Contagious diseases at birds**

Contagious diseases could be transmitted through different ways from one bird to another or from birds to other animals.

The contagious diseases are manifesting by fever, behavioral, posture changes.

### **Prevention of diseases**

It's more important to prevent the disease than to treat it. When you notice that your bird doesn't eat well, has diarrhoea, there's unusual secretion in the nose, it's sleepy, then isolate it and visit your avian vet as soon as possible.

The cage, the drinking and bathing bowls and the perches will need to be cleaned and disinfected with special products recommended by your vet. When you bring a new bird in the house, you'll have to quarantine it for two weeks, to be sure that the “ new bird” is totally healthy.

## **Viral diseases**

Viruses are in a continuous transformation, and the birds with other animals, constitute a reservoir of viruses. There are several vaccines for birds, which helps them to fight against the viruses. The treatment of viral diseases is based on the support of vital functions of bird and the capacity to fight viruses. Administration of vitamins, good quality food and antibiotics ( at the recommendation of the avian vet ).

## **Avian pseudo pest**

The avian pseudo pest is a very contagious disease which mostly affects the backyard birds and could contaminate the cage birds as well. The spread of the pseudo pest virus is made by already infested birds. It could be spread through food, water and air. The infested cage birds are usually placed near the infested backyard birds, which is wrong. Infested birds have several symptoms like diarrhoea, breath difficulties, fever and paralysis of the legs and wings.

## **Avipox at cage birds**

The Avipox virus could affect every backyard and aviary bird. It`s also called “ the suffocation disease “. The signs of

this disease is the breathing through open beak, conjunctivitis and catarrh. There is a cutaneous form which appears as yellowish nodules, on the eyelids, around the nose, cloaca and inside face of the wings. The evolution is very fast at youngsters, without any signs of disease. Administration of vaccine is required which has to be given every year.

### **Pacheco`s disease**

It`s caused by a group of psittacine herpesviruses, a highly contagious disease, with incubation period of 3-14 days, causing sudden death. The infested bird has lack of appetite, diarrhoea, white-yellowish droppings with blood in it. Sometimes appears like conjunctivitis, sinusitis and loss of balance. The sick bird has balance disorder and can`t hold itself on the perch. An antiviral drug (Acyclovir) followed by supportive treatments can reduce death rates in other exposed birds.

### **Marek`s disease**

Marek`s disease is a type of avian cancer which most commonly affects the backyard birds. Tumors can occur in the eyes and cause irregularly shaped pupils and blindness. Tumors of the kidneys, liver, pancreas, muscles can cause incoordination, paleness and weak labored breathing. The Marek's virus is transmitted through the air. The birds can be vaccinated against tumor formation, but does not prevent the infection with the virus.

### **Bacterial diseases**

**Salmonellosis** is produced by a bacteria which affects all species of birds. It cause digestive disorders, fever, diarrhoea, conjunctivitis and damage of the internal organs.

Salmonellosis could spread through contaminated drinking water and food.

The treatment includes Oxytetracycline hydrochloride; Tetracycline in water or food; Chloramphenicol in food ( if the bird accept it).

**Pullorum or Salmonella gallinarum** affects young birds between aged 1-21 days, and it has a high rate of mortality. Symptoms are white droppings and lack of appetite. Treatments: Chloramphenicol injectable.

### **Psittacosis or parrot fever**

It`s caused by a bacteria called Chlamydia psittaci, with symptoms like lack of appetite, weight loss, tiredness, conjunctivitis, diarrhoea. It is transmitted directly from bird to bird or by infested sand, fluff and droppings. The sick bird may shiver or have difficulty breathing and also could have diarrhoea, weight loss, lethargy, discharged from the nose and eyes, etc... At humans the symptoms are as like flu with a strong pneumonia. Before the administration of the antibiotics laboratory analysis of the droppings and blood sample will be necessary for a precise diagnosis.

Treatment at birds: Doxycycline.

### **Pasteurellosis**

It`s an infection caused by a bacteria called Pasteurella which is found in humans and animals as well.

The infection could spread through droppings and saliva of animals. It affects mostly adult birds and the symptoms are fever, tiredness, and the presence of mucous in droppings.

Treatment: Chloramphenicol; Oxytetracycline; Tetracycline;

### **Mycoplasmosis**

It appears at the age of 2-3 days on youngsters, characterized by respiratory problems and conjunctivitis. It has a slow evolution.

Treatment: Oxytetracycline;

## **Mycotic diseases**

Mycotic diseases start with indisposed state, lack of appetite, weight loss, less singing, digestive problems. Moulds produces mycotoxins which attacks the liver and kidneys.

### **Candida (Candidiasis)**

Candida is an infection with the yeast *Candida albicans*, which is normally present in low numbers in the bird's digestive system. If the yeast increase in the digestive tract, Candida could cause problems in other organs like the beak and respiratory system. Candida could also infects the skin, eyes and the reproductive tract of the bird. Infestation of young birds could happen very easily.

Treatments: Stamycin in water or diluted in water and administer through the beak.

### **Aspergillosis**

Aspergillosis is a respiratory disease, caused by infection with a fungus, called *Aspergillus*. Damp bedding and food, inadequate cage cleaning, humidity can increase the number of fungal spores which are inhaled from the environment. Aspergillosis develops in lungs and air sacs of the bird. Open mouthed breathing and respiratory signs are increasing severity of disease.

Treatment: Stamycin in drinking water; potassium iodide in drinking water.

## Aviary plants and shrubs

Here are a few plants and shrubs that will delight your birds, but remember any plant can cause harm if your bird consumes a large enough amount of it.



Blackberry ( *Rubus fruticosus* )

Birch ( *Betula* spp.)

Marigold ( *Calendula officinalis* )

Lemon balm ( *Melissa officinalis* )

Elderberry ( *Sambucus nigra* ): in Autumn the berries will grow almost anywhere;

Snowberry ( *Symphoricarpos albus* ): the birds will find this plant fascinating;

Dog Rose ( *Rosa canina* ): it has scarlet hips and beautiful flowers;

Hawthorn ( *Crataegus monogyna* ): it is ideal for nesting;

Delphinium: the birds will enjoy the seeds of this plant;

Valerian ( *Centranthus ruber* ): can be planted anywhere, the roots have restraint effect on rats;

Sunflower ( *Helianthus multiflorus* ): can be planted anywhere;

Tree Mallow ( *Lavatera olbia* ): it has red flowers which grow up in July and August;

Holly ( *Ilex aquifolium* ): birds will love this plant;

Oregon Grape ( *Mahonia aquifolium* ): that shrub will survive most ravages or soils.

Jasmine ( *Jasminum officinale* ): there are Summer and Winter varieties which will produce yellow or white flowers;



### **Plants that could cause intoxication to your parrots**

Rhododendron, Flamingo Flower, Snowdrop (*Galanthus nivalis*), geranium or storks bills (*Pelargonium*), bearberry ( *Rhamnus purshiana*), ivy ( *Hedera helix* ), lesser celandine ( *Ranunculus ficaria*), deadly nightshade (*Atropa belladonna*), tobacco ( *Nicotiana tabacum*), mistletoe ( *Viscum album* ), philodendron ( *Monstera deliciosa*), wood spurge ( *Euphorbia amygdaloides* ), autumn crocus ( *Colchicum autumnale* ), Avocado (*Persea americana*), Peach (*Prunus persica*), Tomato (*Lycopersicon esculentum*).

You should always ask for a qualified advice from your avian vet, before you plan using any medication especially antibiotics.



I hope this book will help you keep your birds happy and healthy and it is been a pleasure for me to write it down for you. Please check the following page where you can find my other writings:

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